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Official Records

Fifty-first Session

5th plenary meeting
Monday, 23 September 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail . . . . . (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Samper Pizano (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me at the outset, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the current session of the General Assembly. I salute you in my capacity as Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement, which has found in your background a close identity with the defence of the interests of the developing countries. The same is true of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who honoured us with his attendance at the last Non-Aligned Movement summit, held at Cartagena de Indias.

Over the past several years in Colombia, we have been waging a difficult war against drug trafficking. In that battle, judges, police officers, journalists and innocent civilians have lost their lives: more than 20,000 people in the last 10 years. In fact, last week in the southern part of the country more than 50 soldiers of the Colombia army who were destroying illicit crops and cocaine processing laboratories in the jungle region were massacred by guerrillas engaged in the defence of drug trafficking interests. The mother of one of those murdered young men — a 17-year-old soldier — asked me the following day with tears in her eyes: "Why"?

Allow me today to try to answer that mother and all those who have been victims of this war, not only in Colombia, but around the world. Values, democracy and national security are threatened. We are waging this war to preserve and protect those values; to protect and preserve our youth and our democratic form of government; but above all to protect our national security. No country in the world must ignore the battle against drugs. This war is occurring today in every country, owing to the broad power of powerful international criminal and terrorist organizations which have extended their tentacles over the entire planet.

Now that the cold war has ended, the United Nations and the world must design and develop a strategy to put an immediate end to the greatest threat to the world's security and stability today: the threat of drugs. It is an epidemic that, more than any other war, can undermine the value structure which supports the governability of democratic systems.

As we prepare for the twenty-first century, I invite all world leaders present or represented here today, to a collective and above all sincere reflection on this

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proposal, which Colombia presents with the moral authority it has been granted, having been the nation which has suffered most, which has invested most, and which has paid the highest social and economic costs in this struggle against drug trafficking.

In recent years, Colombia has spent 14 times more resources fighting drug trafficking than what is invested annually by the international community through the United Nations system for the same purpose. Thanks to this determined effort, Colombia has been able to avoid the annual distribution throughout the world of more than 6 billion doses intended for drug users.

I, too, have been a victim of drug trafficking. Several years ago I was the target of an assassination attempt that almost cost me my life. I received 11 bullet wounds, and still carry four bullets in my body. More recently I fell victim to another assassination attempt, this time of a moral nature. I was accused of having allowed money from a cartel to infiltrate my campaign. Despite that, from the very first day of my Administration we have worked successfully to arrest the criminals and completely destroy the powerful Cali cartel.

I thank God that I survived that assault too. The Congress of the Republic of Colombia, which, under our Constitution is the judge of the President, completely exonerated me of all charges after a long trial that I personally requested be held in public. Barely 48 hours ago, before coming to the Assembly, I was the victim of yet another attempt. Heroin was smuggled onto my aeroplane in order to shame Colombia and its democratic Government. This new attempt proved that the criminal organizations have the power and the capability to penetrate almost every institution in our society, anywhere in the world. However, I stand here today, before this world Assembly of democracy, with complete dignity because nobody will stop me from presenting to the world Colombia's proposals to deal with the drug organizations.

I am speaking to the Assembly today bearing the painful scars of those encounters. Similar scars are borne by all Colombians who have been physically injured by drug terrorism or morally wounded by international misunderstanding. I am not here to complain; I am here to propose a solution to this modern-day epidemic. I am convinced that the world is losing the war against drugs. The solution will have to be as global as the problem itself. It will have to be as swift and irreversible as the damage that drugs and crime are causing to the minds of the young drug users of the world.

The achievements of Colombia and other countries do not imply that the problem of drug trafficking has been eradicated throughout the world. The drug problem will be resolved only when all countries, without exception and without hypocrisy, shoulder their own responsibilities, which cannot be delegated to others.

To achieve this, we must set out the parameters for a great anti-drug alliance, which include immediate and decisive action. If we do not accomplish this, drug trafficking, the most sinister transnational enterprise in the world, whose resources equal $500 billion per year — more than those of the world-wide petroleum industry — will continue to corrupt and contaminate our peoples.

The statistics on international action to date are not very encouraging. Drug use continues to increase under the tolerant attitudes of some Governments, and the level of drug seizures and confiscation barely exceeds 10 per cent of the total of such drugs circulating in the world. In the face of this demoralizing reality we have only two alternatives: mutual recrimination, or cooperation. Either we continue to criticize each other, or we work together. Multilateral focus on the problem is the only alternative; interventionism is not the way. The only end that unilateral or interventionist measures achieve, as we have seen recently, is to break mutual trust, weaken the ability of Governments to take action, and open the way for the consolidation of criminal organizations.

Colombia proposes an agenda of global action against drugs, based on the principles of shared responsibility, equality and an integrated approach: shared responsibility, because we are all responsible for the problem of ethical, political, social and economic contamination produced by drug trafficking throughout the world; equality, because no country should assume the right to judge the conduct of another on a subject that involves the responsibility of all on standards of behaviour that are worldwide and collective; and integration, because every phase of the process — from agricultural production, to industrial processing, transport, distribution, consumption, and money laundering — must be addressed simultaneously, and with the same energy.

Colombia wants to be part of the solution. We do not want to continue to be demonized by the world when, in fact, we are victims, as all peoples are. The issues for the global agenda against drugs are as follows: first, with regard to the establishment of a social machinery for the eradication of illegal crops, it is not enough to eradicate

such crops if we are not capable of offering alternative solutions for small peasant farmers.

Colombia endorses the innovative proposal of French President Jacques Chirac to create a mechanism to enable the purchase of produce grown as alternatives for illegal crops at prices that closely approximate those paid for coca, opium poppies and marijuana. The establishment of this mechanism should be accompanied by a commitment to aerial and manual eradication over five years, which would lead to the elimination of these illicit crops throughout the world.

Secondly, we need controls on the trafficking of chemical precursors and weapons, which are speeding drug trafficking and the violence that it generates. The United Nations system must define, within the framework of the Vienna Convention, specific guidelines to regulate the pre-shipment certification of chemical precursors to drug-producing countries, and contribute to producing effective systems to control arms sales to those same destinations.

As regards a mandate to combat money laundering, only decisive action against the profits generated by the drug business can stop the recycling of these resources into production and distribution centres. Eighty per cent of drug trafficking money circulates through the economic and financial channels of the industrialized nations. We need much stricter controls on the banking system and on industries whose smuggling of goods and services are being used to launder this drug money.

We propose that the mandate of the European agreement governing money laundering, investigation, seizure and forfeiture of assets derived from drug trafficking be extended to the global level. Concurrently, we should expand globally those decisions reached at the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime held at Naples in 1994.

As regards a worldwide intelligence centre for cooperation in operations against cartels and drug trafficking networks, we believe that in dealing with international crime which starts in one place, continues in another and ends at the point of consumption, the combined action of all countries is required to develop the necessary intelligence and police operations to seize shipments, dismantle networks and pursue domestic drug dealers and distributors. Colombia proposes such an organization of a worldwide intelligence centre against drugs. This centre would coordinate the collection of evidence from every police force in the world to fight the unified multinational drug traffickers with an equally unified response.

As regards programmes which effectively curb demand, statistics worryingly show that consumption is growing, not declining, and that it is doing so in the most vulnerable sectors of our society: among young people and ethnic minorities. Unless we curb demand, the task of fighting supply will be ineffective in achieving a definitive solution to the problem.

One cannot place the entire burden of drug fighting on drug-producing countries, which are the weakest link. We are speaking of a market that must be controlled from both sides. Starting with an agreement on the goals for the reduction of consumption, we propose the adoption of an integrated plan that includes prevention campaigns, action by non-governmental organizations and public health initiatives accompanied by stricter laws against the distribution and consumption of illegal drugs.

Finally, we propose a world treaty of judicial cooperation in the war against drugs and terrorism which must have no frontiers. Recognizing the sovereign right of every nation to apply justice in its own territory for crimes committed within its boundaries, no nation should agree to be used as a refuge or sanctuary for organized crime. Judicial reciprocity and assistance in the exchange of evidence, the criminalization and judicial seizure of assets derived from drug trafficking and terrorism, extradition and the creation of high-security prisons with standards subject to international monitoring must be an integral part of this strategy.

Without undermining bilateral or regional agreements, these judicial cooperation agreements would establish the basis for the eventual formation of an international tribunal against organized crime. Signatory countries would submit international criminals such as arms dealers, drug traffickers, money launderers and terrorists to the jurisdiction of this tribunal according to the terms of their participation agreements.

Colombia proposes to this Assembly the formation of a group of experts who would be charged with developing a timetable and action plan for this proposed global agenda for the war against drugs. An initial review of the group's progress could be made at the 1998 special session of the General Assembly which has been proposed by the Government of Mexico. The group of experts should be formed in four months' time, and Colombia will be pleased to host its first meeting. I call

on world leaders to communicate to Colombia their recommendations on how best to organize the work of this group of experts.

The globalization of problems in today's world is taking place much faster than the globalization of solutions. Terrorism, and drugs and arms trafficking do not respect either national boundaries or barriers. Developing countries have fewer opportunities and more limited resources to confront the invasive power of these threats, in the face of which there are neither weak nor strong, only victims.

I invoke the memory of those killed by these wars which will also exist in the next century. I invoke our children's future, threatened by bombs, illegal drugs and guns. I invoke the plain cause of the coexistence of the world in order to commit ourselves to this formidable task of blocking the path of organized crime which today challenges our right to govern the world in peace. Finally, I invoke the tears of all the mothers and youths of the world who have been sacrificed in the fight against drugs or through their use. May God illuminate our path that we may continue this battle.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ernesto Samper Pizano, President of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 ***(continued)***

General Debate

Address by His Excellency The Right Honourable Sir Julius Chan, KBE, GCMG, MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Sir Julius Chan, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Julius Chan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sir Julius Chan (Papua New Guinea): On behalf of the people and the Government of Papua New Guinea, I congratulate you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. The warm relations that have developed between our two nations make it a particular pleasure to welcome you to your high office and to wish you well in carrying out your duties. I would also like to record our sincere appreciation for the wise leadership with which your predecessor guided our deliberations during the historic fiftieth session of the General Assembly.

The rapid approach of the year 2000 raises the question whether — and how — we are going to try to make the turn of the century a turning point for the United Nations. Despite the many thought-provoking speeches made for the fiftieth anniversary, I regret to say that signs of fundamental and far-reaching changes required remain elusive. Yet we live at a time when the only constant factor is change. The preamble to its Charter makes it quite clear that the United Nations itself was — and is — intended to be an agent of change. If our Organization is to remain relevant to the challenges ahead, then it, and we the Members, must adapt and keep on adapting, as the world continues to change.

Invented to raise humanity's sights beyond the horizon of destruction caused by world war, the United Nations must be continuously reinvented in order to play an effective role in a rapidly changing world. The United Nations has in fact been successful at one kind of change: adding to our agenda responsibilities and activities in areas such as peacekeeping, peacemaking, human rights and sustainable development. It has, however, been very much less successful in rationalizing its operations and administrative support.

Humanity needs a much more focused, trim and vital United Nations. Without internal reform, the risk of overload is only too real — and, arguably, overload is already here. Even more importantly, we, the Members of the United Nations, have to do more, much more, to adapt key institutions to the changed and still-changing circumstances of a post-colonial, post-cold-war world.

Almost everyone agrees what the main issues and options are. Yet as far as its permanent membership goes, the Security Council in particular remains, much as it has always been, the product of decisions made before most Member States became independent. Some of the strongest critics of the cost and alleged inefficiencies of the United Nations come from States that are among the slowest in paying their membership dues. While they criticize weaknesses in the Organization's performance, they are often among the most eager

advocates of giving it new assignments. Their actions — and inaction — suggest that they confuse cutbacks in the resources available to the United Nations with real reform.

Like other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to reforming the Security Council. While we recognize that those whom existing arrangements most favour are well placed to delay or block change, we firmly believe that the Council's composition should be altered. It must take better account of the geographical distribution and sovereign equality of Member States. Concerned that it seems to be taking longer to reform than it originally took to form the United Nations, Papua New Guinea's voice and vote are emphatically for change. We believe that the time for action is now.

Papua New Guinea has embarked on an ambitious programme of domestic reforms, including both constitutional and economic-policy changes. Having legislated a new system of provincial and local-level governments in order to improve the delivery of services to our people, we are actively engaged in implementation. Twenty-one years after giving ourselves a "home-grown" Constitution, we are now engaged in a comprehensive process of reform that is equally "home-grown".

My Government is just as determined to bring about comprehensive structural adjustment. Following decisions to devalue and float our national currency, the kina, we are now reducing the size of the public sector. We are making the official interface with the private sector more business-friendly and encouraging commercial enterprise. While international agencies and foreign aid donors provide valuable support, the impulse, direction and pace of reform are emphatically Papua New Guinea's own. Being a member of the Government that led Papua New Guinea to its independence, I cannot allow our national sovereignty — or our Government's ability to respond to our people's needs — to be compromised now.

Experience of the difficulties of reform at home has reinforced my Government's commitment to reforming the United Nations. The principles remain the same. We strongly support efforts to ensure that the world has a truly effective, flexible and responsive Organization through which to cooperate in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century.

The United Nations is founded on the idea that security involves much more than military defence against threats of armed attack. Conscious of the threats and limitations on self-defence that we face together with other small island developing countries, Papua New Guinea has always regarded collective security as an important key to national security. Diplomacy is the means by which we seek to cooperate with all other States committed to peace.

As the current Chairman of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), I am pleased to report that we welcomed Fiji as a new member at our Summit in June. We also adopted a document — "Melanesia Beyond 2000" — which outlines our objectives and strategy for the MSG's second decade.

We have emphasized our commitment to cooperation on a wide basis and have also agreed to a proposal on weapons control. The South Pacific Forum is developing the idea on a region-wide basis. Following the extreme outrage that the South Pacific felt when France resumed its testing programme in French Polynesia last year, I can now report that the programme has ceased. The remaining nuclear Powers with interests in our region — France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America — have signed the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Treaty of Rarotonga). France has been readmitted as a post-Forum dialogue partner.

As much as we welcome the developments during the past 12 months, Papua New Guinea believes that more is required before our region can be described as genuinely nuclear-free. Outstanding needs include a broader treaty, systematic monitoring of former test-sites, cleaning up, compensation and the provision of alternative sources of income for the people of French Polynesia.

The Treaty of Rarotonga is complemented by the MSG's Lakatoro Declaration on Denuclearization in Oceania. Subregional and regional efforts are again complemented by similar arrangements negotiated during the past year in South-East Asia and Africa, as well as by the much older arrangements that apply to Antarctica and Latin America. Papua New Guinea welcomes the Brazilian proposal to link these arrangements into a comprehensive nuclear-weapon-free zone covering the entire southern hemisphere. Having supported the recent passage of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, we would now like to see it extended to outlawing simulations, limiting the development and acquisition of new nuclear weapons and, ultimately, bringing about complete disarmament.

The South Pacific Forum has expressed support for the early conclusion of negotiations over a legal regime covering civil liability for nuclear damage.

Committed to furthering cooperation against threats to our region, the South Pacific Forum is working on an arrangement through which member States can respond to legitimate requests for assistance from one another's disciplined services, including police. The same arrangement could also be used for consultations intended to help prevent, manage and settle disputes. We continue to broaden, deepen and diversify other areas of security cooperation, including law enforcement.

Consistent with agreements reached at the regional level, Papua New Guinea has adopted a comprehensive code of logging practice designed to promote the sustainable use and in-country processing of a rich renewable natural resource.

We are gravely concerned at the threat that climate change poses to the very survival of low-lying atolls. Entire countries in our region face the risk of extinction. Papua New Guinea joins with other developing countries in calling on the advanced industrialized countries to look beyond their immediate self-interest and adopt specific targets for reducing greenhouse emissions, an issue which generates considerable emotion among us.

Together with other coastal States in the region, we look to distant-water fishing nations for cooperation in giving effect to the United Nations Agreement on straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks so that it does not weaken existing regional arrangements.

In the wider Asia-Pacific region, Papua New Guinea calls for a reduction of avoidable sources of stress, uncertainty and risk on the Korean Peninsula, both for the sake of the countries directly involved and because of their potentially adverse effects on other countries.

Concerned about events earlier in the year, I repeat last year's call for the United Nations to do its best to ease the tensions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Important regional organizations in the Asia-Pacific have found ways of following the principle within the region. The European Parliament has adopted a resolution recommending that the United Nations identify options for Taiwan to take part in the activities of bodies answerable to the General Assembly. The United Nations has an obligation to assist in maintaining a secure environment in which economic growth and other forms of development can continue for the benefit of the peoples of the region as well as their partners around the world. It is therefore time to address the question of Taiwanese participation in institutions and processes set up to further the universal objectives of the United Nations Charter.

Respect for the national sovereignty of Member States is basic to the United Nations Charter. Small island developing countries tend to be especially vulnerable to a wide range of possible threats. Their development, and even their very survival, often depend on international cooperation and law.

Having achieved national independence under United Nations supervision, Papua New Guinea is firmly committed to the United Nations Special Committee on the Situation With Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. Despite criticism from certain quarters, we were therefore pleased to welcome and host the Special Committee's regional seminar held in Port Moresby in June. Together with all other members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the South Pacific Forum, we remain firmly committed to the orderly decolonization of New Caledonia, with special safeguards for the indigenous Kanaks. We will not accept illegitimate attempts to delay or derail complete implementation of the Matignon Agreements. Having reviewed the French Government's record elsewhere in the region, we ask ourselves whether French Polynesia, as well as Walis and Futuna, should be included in the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The international community has a duty to see that France meets its responsibilities to the people of our region and a prime responsibility must be the right of self-determination.

On Bougainville, my Government is firmly committed to doing all that we can to resolve the crisis that has racked the Bougainville Province in my country since 1989. I therefore negotiated a cease-fire, arranged a regional peacekeeping force and agreed to peace talks in October 1994, only to find that the militant leaders would not honour the agreements reached. Even so, my Government has been prepared to talk to those who will talk to us. We have established the Bougainville Transitional Government and continue to provide protection for people forced to flee from their homes by the criminal actions of an armed and militant minority. We continue to restore services and to encourage reconciliation, but the mounting toll of destruction, injury and loss of life caused by the militants gave the National

Government no alternative but to lift the ceasefire on 21 March this year.

Even now, rival gangs of armed criminals continue to threaten the lives of innocent people, trying to destroy what the people, provincial leaders and the national Government are doing and reconstructing. They undermine all efforts to maintain the rule of law. In a particularly barbaric attack on 8 September this year, 12 members of our security forces were killed at the Kangu Care Centre in South Bougainville.

Despite the worst efforts of the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and its sympathizers abroad, my Government is standing firm. We will not give them the satisfaction of departing from our basic objective of restoring peace and rebuilding all they have destroyed.

We appreciate the understanding displayed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights when it considered the Bougainville situation earlier this year. It has always been a complex domestic issue. In keeping with the mutual respect for national sovereignty that is basic to international law, Papua New Guinea calls on all other States to refrain from statements and actions that send misleading signals to those who violate our laws; to cooperate in preventing smuggling and other illegal violations of our borders; and generally to prevent outsiders from interfering illegally in Papua New Guinea's internal affairs. In so doing, we add the reminder that it is not the foreign meddlers who will suffer most from the effects of the crisis — it will be the people of Papua New Guinea, including the overwhelming majority of Bougainvilleans, who consider themselves to be part of our nation and entitled to the same rights as all other Papua New Guineans.

Conscious of the violations that have occurred on all sides and of the need to avoid any repetition, my Government is in the process of trying to strengthen existing arrangements by establishing a national commission on human rights.

My Government has embarked on an ambitious programme of structural adjustment, because we — and not some outside body — think that we should in order to ensure that development can be sustained for future generations. While we accept external advice and appreciate external assistance, we have not yielded to, and will not give in to, external pressure. It is crucial that the official conduct of such bodies not raise basic questions about relations between these institutions and the sovereignty of the member States that they are supposed to serve.

National and collective self-reliance are both means of achieving and integral to the objective of sustainable development. They are critical to maintaining and strengthening the security and sovereignty of States. National self-reliance is among Papua New Guinea's constitutional goals and directive principles. Collective self-reliance through South Pacific cooperation is among the commitments contained in my Government's Pacific Plan and implemented through our current national budget.

My Government's proposal that Papua New Guinea should enter into a form of permanent association with the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) is intended to further the process by which we cooperate with neighbouring countries to promote collective self-reliance. We appreciate the positive interest that ASEAN members have expressed in the idea and we strongly support closer cooperation between ASEAN and the South Pacific Forum.

As the only Pacific island country directly involved in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (APEC), but by no means the only such country likely to be affected by the process, Papua New Guinea has proposed that APEC set up a scheme to help build capacity among the 13 small island developing countries in the region so that they are not left or pushed behind.

The proposal that we are now developing in greater detail is emphatically not intended to be yet another open-ended aid programme under a different name. Rather, it is intended to help small island countries manage their way through the transition to the achievement of APEC's vision of open-ended regional free trade by the year 2020.

As an active participant in institutions established under the Lomé Convention, Papua New Guinea would like to encourage other member States to give early consideration to the kinds of changes that would facilitate development processes and objectives consistent with World Trade Organization rules.

Conscious of the aid fatigue now spreading through many advanced industrial countries, we urge Governments and people of goodwill to recognize the time and effort that development requires. With a few very honourable exceptions, donor countries have not

reached — and in many cases have fallen far behind — aid targets to which they agreed a generation ago.

Thus, not only has aid been reduced, but recipients are even more locked and tied to donors' own preferences. The effect that the failure to honour commitments can have on national forward planning can be very severe. It underlines the need for a reduced reliance on aid and for the development of a greater degree of self-reliance.

In view of the vital role that the business sector can play in mobilizing capital for investment and trade, we welcome schemes designed to assist in the development of the private sector. We especially welcome the contributions made to such schemes by the advanced industrial countries.

We cannot achieve all our reforms without the support of world institutions. That is accepted. However, those institutions themselves need to operate with greater flexibility and to be more sensitive to the particular needs of Governments to preserve democracy, the environment and their people's national identity and culture.

My Government takes a global view of Papua New Guinea's foreign relations and of issues on the United Nations agenda. We encourage official agencies, business and non-governmental organizations both to "Look North" and to "Work the Pacific" for mutual benefit with close neighbours. Conscious that we must not overlook longstanding friends, we give high priority to reinforcing core relationships. Our overall objective is to continue reform at home in order to meet the challenges of global change.

We will continue to support wider efforts at reform, including those directed at and through the United Nations, in order to meet the challenges of global change and embrace the imperatives of reform in readiness for the twenty-first century.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Sir Julius Chan, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway.

Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Brundtland (Norway): Tomorrow, I am going to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty on behalf of Norway. We join with almost all countries in celebrating our new freedom — freedom from fear of nuclear contamination and proliferation. By our joint resolve, the terror of competitive madness fell victim to the sheer force of reason.

Thanks to the United Nations, the norm of non-testing has been galvanized. It is today part and parcel of international law. In the future, no country, whether it has signed that treaty or not, will be able to break that norm. That can no longer be done with impunity. It will go down in the annals of history that nuclear testing was carried out over a period of 40 years in the twentieth century, and then never again.

The decades of negotiations seemed endless, and without the perseverance of this Organization, it would not have worked. Where else could we carve out a global test ban? Where else can we cast norms of global applicability? Where else can we extend an international society based on law and contract?

That is what the United Nations does best. It is easy to ridicule years of meticulous negotiations. It is easy to deride the process as bloated bureaucracy and inefficiency. It is easy because that also happens every day, here by the East River. And we must never become used to that.

But some processes take time because they are difficult and because they have profound effects on the whole world. Every country, every man, woman and child depend on what we can achieve right here, and every country represented here has a stake in our success or our failure.

For more than 50 years, the United Nations has — for better, but also for worse — reflected its Members, global political trends, contrasts, conflicts and confrontations. It has been judged, unjustly, more by its failures than by its successes.

The integration of scores of new Member States, peace-keeping operations, the promotion and protection of human rights, and field activities in developing countries bringing relief and consolation to millions of destitute people all bear witness to how the United Nations has harnessed the best of humanity and civilization. Today, the threats to peace come not so much from contention between great States. Today's killing fields are within States. Out of around 40 cases of armed conflict in the world today, hardly any occur between States. These conflicts are deeply embedded in the history of regions and peoples, where disruption within societies date far back, some being centuries old.

The price of intra-State conflict is being paid by civilians. Ninety per cent of casualties in armed conflict are civilians. They literally walk the minefields where millions of anti-personnel mines are strewn. Not only is the death-toll numbing; let us also count the many missed years of economic production, the livestock lost, the schools ravaged, the clinics destroyed.

Millions pay the terrible human price. But we all pay a price if the gap deepens between the fundamental norms of civilization and the daily suffering in too many countries in too many parts of the world. Reversing that trend is our moral obligation; preventing deadly conflict is our common challenge.

True, the United Nations is increasingly involved in internal crises. We still do not possess the necessary means, mandates and mission capacity to suppress devastating conflict. All too often, intervention comes when the conflict has erupted, when the battles have been fought and the dividing lines have been cemented. When the peacemakers are ready to go, it may be late — often too late.

We lack efficient procedures for dealing with emerging conflicts. To individual countries, emerging intra-State conflict may not be deemed vital. But to the United Nations, any armed conflict or threat of conflict must be vital. We need more preventive action and more preventive diplomacy. Here at the United Nations, we need to develop the institutional, legal and managerial capacity to act, which would provide a model for regional action. Preventing conflict and human suffering must not be hampered by the traditional norm of what is essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of States. Killing people cannot be protected by the Charter.

A situation which is not visibly dangerous and which does not offer spectacular pictures for the evening news, is all too often silenced and out of the news picture. And since those who suffer have no vote in any of the countries which command the resources to help, it may be all too convenient to look the other way.

But reacting in time need not be costly. On the contrary, there is so much to gain, there is so much to save. Much could be achieved if the United Nations were better able to send experienced diplomats and support missions to conflict-ridden areas in timely endeavours to deescalate conflict and reconstruct civil society. We know that the hands of the Secretary-General are often tied in such cases, when it comes to redirecting resources. That is another challenge. United Nations expertise — our expertise — may not show up in a situation because there are insufficient funds to pay for air tickets.

Norway is ready to make an extra contribution. We offer to establish a fund for preventive action here at the United Nations. We pledge to fill it with approximately 1 million dollars on an annual basis, and we invite other Governments to join us. The fund would facilitate immediate deployment of first-class expertise for proactive diplomacy.

Any organization that fails to change is bound to lose its effectiveness. So we must press on with reform. But we cannot accept intimidation. Withholding legally assessed contributions amounts to just that. Today, some countries in fact pay more than their fair share. Other countries voluntarily pay more than their fair share. Many countries pay too little, or hardly anything at all. We now need to settle on a long-term solution based on a more equitable scale of contributions and scrupulous respect by Member States for their financial obligations and the payment of arrears.

We must press on with reform of the Security Council. We are not served by protracted denials of the world as it is. The Security Council must reflect this world, and the issue of a regionally-balanced enlargement must now be addressed. Asia, Africa and Latin America should be represented on a permanent basis. Japan and Germany should each have a permanent seat. And as we enlarge the Council we must see to it that the efficiency

of decision-making is retained and that the Council's implementing ability is greatly enhanced.

If we had sat down at the drawing board to create the United Nations today, we would have grouped the most closely interlinked challenges together and designated a limited number of agencies to deal with them. Today, in the social and economic field, responsibility for sustainable development, poverty, population and education is divided. There is too much fragmentation and too many turf battles.

We need a leaner — and thereby, I believe, stronger — structure to deal with what we decided in Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing. Now we must do what we said there.

The Nordic countries, in their ongoing project for United Nations reform, have focused on the other end of the spectrum — the country level. Today, there are several United Nations representatives in one country, often overlapping each other and often contributing to more fragmentation. But political issues, humanitarian issues and long-term development are interlinked. Our organizational set-up should be the same. Let us coordinate our humanitarian assistance activities better, thus allowing us to react more quickly and more effectively. And let us speak out more openly about human rights.

Human rights are violated all over the world. But only in a few countries is the human rights situation deteriorating. We may be impatient; we may find that progress is too slow in important countries; and there may be temporary set-backs.

But in a world of global communication, facts can no longer be hidden. We cannot build fences around ideas in the age of the Internet. It will become increasingly impossible to derive the benefits of the global economy without exposing political power structures to the scrutiny of democracy.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty established a global norm. This is what the United Nations does best and what it must continue to do. The first Chapter of the Charter calls for effective collective measures for the removal of threats to the peace. Our challenge is to grasp the complexity of today's threats. No single country is powerful enough to deal alone with the threats that transcend our frontiers — terrorism, nuclear proliferation, drugs, crime, disease and damage to the environment. They all require common action. They all belong on our common agenda.

Five years ago in Rio we reached consensus on Agenda 21. That was a call for action. Together we sowed the first seeds of a global norm for sustainable development. Now we must struggle on towards its implementation.

Later this year we will start the final work on a climate protocol. No challenge is more global than climate change. We owe it to present and future generations to come up with a binding agreement that is cost-effective, equitable and verifiable. That process will require a combined political and scientific craftsmanship which will need to draw upon every experience we have had in multilateral diplomacy so far.

There can be no civilized world unless we unite to strengthen multilateralism by establishing global norms, by building and raising the minimum standards of inter- and intra-State behaviour, and by building new norms of international accountability.

The war crimes tribunal in The Hague is a building-block in that edifice. The preventive aspect would be served if the Karadzićs and Mladićs of this world were brought to justice to answer for their crimes.

But again, conflicts should not be allowed to go that far. We must be able to address the root causes of conflict in time. That is what prevention is all about. That is the win-win game we should all be playing. We cannot afford not to do so.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway, was escorted from the rostrum.

Agenda item 9 ***(continued)***

General debate

The President: I now call on the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin.

Mr. Mesfin (Ethiopia): First of all, I should like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I wish to assure you the full cooperation of my delegation in the discharge of this heavy responsibility entrusted to you. I

should like also to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Freitas do Amaral, for the able manner in which he fulfilled his responsibilities.

Last year we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and reiterated our dedication to the purposes and principles of the Organization, for the promotion of which it was established. That occasion also afforded us the opportunity to take stock of United Nations achievements and of its yet-unfinished business, as well as of the continuing challenges faced by both the Organization and the international community at large.

That stock-taking exercise could not have led us to underestimate, let alone belittle, what has been achieved by the United Nations. In any case, in so far as the United Nations is our universal Organization, its failings can only be our failings, as its successes are also ours. None the less, last year's stock-taking of the performance of the 50-year-old United Nations must have underlined more than anything else how complex and daunting the challenges faced by the Organization and by the international community are becoming. There are probably no greater challenges before the international community in this regard than those of development and of peace and stability — two concerns that define the very essence of the United Nations and that constitute the core purposes and objectives of the Organization.

It is not yet a distant memory that we all rejoiced at the end of the cold war, believing that it would open up new vistas of opportunity for addressing the vital issues of international concern that had been overshadowed for decades by the arms race, East-West rivalry and other manifestations of the cold-war era. That positive development — the end of the cold war — also encouraged many in the developing world, especially those of us in Africa, to undertake far-reaching political and economic reform measures, with a view to laying the foundation for democratic transformation and meaningful economic growth and development.

Despite all these manifested hopes and courageous moves towards economic reform and democracy, the situation on the African continent remains a source of great concern. At present, Africa is the only continent where the level of poverty is increasing dramatically. Needless to say, this trend could lead to unimaginable consequences unless it is arrested and reversed as speedily as possible.

Mr. de Moura (Angola), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Thus, Africa's genuine fear is that the opportunity created by the end of the cold war will disappear and that a historic chance will be squandered forever.

It is by no means accidental that, of all the regions of the world, Africa is the most affected by conflicts and lack of stability. Conflicts in our continent have not only been greater in number, but have also proved to be more intractable and, more often than not, more deadly and more destructive, in terms of both human lives and property.

It may not always be plausible to suggest that all conflicts in Africa have their roots in economic difficulties only. But, whatever the constellation of factors immediately responsible for specific conflict situations in Africa, the fact remains that in most instances civil strife and conflicts in the continent have emerged within the context of deteriorating economic situations. In this context, the only durable solution for the political crisis in Africa can be found in the economic regeneration and development of the continent. Development is therefore the only reliable preventive means to ensure and maintain peace and stability in Africa.

The development of Africa will continue to be a distant dream unless the known obstacles are removed, among which the debt burden continues to be the major impediment. In this context, we are encouraged by the recent Lyon summit of the Group of Seven, which we were hopeful would go beyond the Naples terms in easing the debt overhang for countries such as Ethiopia. We also hope that some progress will be made during the upcoming annual meeting of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in connection with multilateral debt. For countries like my own, this is very crucial indeed.

While durable solutions to conflicts and to the lack of peace and stability in Africa or anywhere else can hardly be achieved within the context of economic dislocation and economic decline, it is also equally true that development requires peace and stability. This is the vicious circle we find ourselves in, which makes it difficult to find speedy resolution of the very many conflict situations that have led to unspeakable human suffering, and on some occasions to genocide, in Africa.

In Somalia, where peace and national reconciliation have eluded the people for close to six years, we are still far from making any headway in reversing the situation.

Efforts are, however, still continuing to help bring about national reconciliation in Somalia, and my own Prime Minister has continued to attach the highest importance to this endeavour. In all these efforts, the role of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has been vital; whether it is in Liberia, Burundi, Somalia or other conflict situations in Africa, the important contribution that the OAU Secretary-General has been making is a source of great satisfaction to us. The Organization of African Unity has indeed upgraded its capacity for conflict resolution in our continent since the establishment in 1993 of the OAU Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. I wish to seize this opportunity to express appreciation to all those who have continued to help ensure that the OAU's role in this area is strengthened and enhanced.

Conflict situations, whether in Africa or elsewhere, have negative consequences not only for the countries directly affected but also for their neighbours and their regions. The situation in Somalia has not been an exception to this. The absence of central authority for an extended period of time in that country has been seen to provide opportunity for extra-regional elements bent on exporting terror and on experimenting with plans designed to create instability and chaos in our region. It is therefore in my country's direct national interest that peace be established and national reconciliation achieved in Somalia as speedily as possible.

This is also in the interest of our region in general. Our region, which has had a prolonged period of instability and which has also recently experienced State-sponsored terrorism, cannot afford and should not be expected to tolerate the proliferation and the establishment of centres of international terrorism by multinational elements in our midst. The spread of terrorism is not a danger merely to our region, but to the international community as a whole. Ethiopia's conscience is clear in this regard because it has done its level best to fulfil its responsibilities in the fight against terrorism, and it will always remain committed to combating this evil.

At present, the most worrying conflict, with the potential for a level of human slaughter which we all dread to see, is the one in Burundi. The parties to the conflict in Burundi have the responsibility to save their society from decimation through accommodation based on principles that suit the specific conditions of their country. Others with a much more complex societal mix have managed to put in place democratic mechanisms to reconcile the right of the majority to govern with sufficient guarantees for the security and dignity of the minority. This is what ex-President Mwalimu Nyerere has been striving to assist the Burundi parties to achieve through the Mwanza peace process, a process which enjoys the full support of the United Nations and of the international community. I wish to take this opportunity to express appreciation for the resolve and unity that the countries of the region have demonstrated in an effort to see to it that disaster is averted in Burundi and that the country achieves national reconciliation. I wish also to express appreciation to all those who have continued to support the Mwanza process and the initiative that was taken by the countries of the region on 31 July 1996.

My country, which emerged from a very difficult period of conflicts and severe economic hardships only five years ago, has made major strides on all fronts during this brief period of time. We draw immense satisfaction from the fact that our people have finally achieved durable peace and stability. Moreover, our economic reform programmes have started to bear fruit; we are encouraged by the results achieved, particularly in agricultural production, over the past few years. That Ethiopia now has the capacity not only to feed itself, but also to be an exporter of food grains, is increasingly becoming a reality.

Ethiopia is striving to enhance its capacity to become a useful and effective partner in international economic cooperation. We intend to make our country an attractive place for investment; all the necessary foundations have already been laid by my Government to this end. We are determined to make trade and investment the major pillars of our economic cooperation with others.

Ethiopia has also endeavoured to contribute its share to regional and international peace and stability over the past few years. That is a policy that we intend to expand further with a view to fulfilling our regional and international commitments, no matter how small our contribution might be.

Ethiopia welcomes the recent adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty by the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. We believe that it represents an important step towards the attainment of the larger objectives of nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

As a founding Member of the United Nations, Ethiopia attaches the highest importance to the work of

the United Nations and wishes to see the Organization revitalized and strengthened. In this context, Ethiopia, like many other countries, is convinced that the future of the United Nations lies in its democratization and in the creation of conditions under which all Member States, big or small, will feel that the Organization belongs equally to all of them.

With respect to developments in Africa, in the area of conflict prevention and in other areas, my Government is keen to see more effective cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity. No doubt, much work needs to be done in this area, and we are confident that the mechanism for consultation already in place between the two organizations will be utilized more effectively and with a far greater sense of purpose and consistency.

I wish to take this opportunity to express my Government's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his very useful and timely initiative on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. The Special Initiative is complementary to the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, and, through the reallocation of existing resources and the mobilization of additional ones, will contribute to the development of Africa. We hope that the Special Initiative will be implemented as planned and that it will not, like previous initiatives, remain unfulfilled and be another source of frustration and an empty promise.

We believe that the United Nations can do more to promote effectively the purposes and principles enshrined in its Charter and to galvanize international cooperation to achieve peace and development. Our world cannot afford to see the international community divided in two, with one half remaining poor and becoming even poorer. The imperatives of interdependence dictate that this trend be reversed, especially when all that those who are lagging behind demand is the removal of the obstacles to development and an opportunity to address their economic problems on the basis of their own efforts.

Ethiopia is confident that the United Nations will play an increasingly dynamic role, so that all the nations and peoples of the world will have an equal stake in the preservation of global civilization and in enriching human society.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Peru, His Excellency Mr. Francisco Tudela Van Breughel Douglas.

Mr. Tudela Van Breughel Douglas (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, allow me, Sir, to convey to you and to this Assembly the greetings and congratulations of the Peruvian people, as well as their best wishes and hopes for the future.

Peru is a country that has successfully dealt with its domestic contradictions, and which is looking with vision and determination towards the broad new horizons of international activity. A careful review of what has been achieved to date reveals that much remains to be done; but it also shows that we are following the right course in addressing the demands of our times.

However, it would be superficial to use this Assembly, whose central theme is the reform of the United Nations, to recapitulate the events of the past year. We must wake up to the outcome of a long historical process that has accelerated markedly over the last quarter of a century and established around the world a network of international organizations that today exceed the number of States. We must also wake up to a fortunate new development: the individual human being has acquired a position of cardinal importance in the international system.

The organizations established by States to satisfy international, human and regional needs, have acquired a permanent character and have created new systems of international relations. When we speak today of reforming the United Nations, no one fails to acknowledge that new mechanisms are required to promote greater development and economic and social stability in the world, and to face current and future conflicts between and within States.

There is discussion of the possibility of creating a new economic council and a new social council, as well as expanding and strengthening the Security Council. At the same time, the need has emerged to transform and rationalize the United Nations system, together with the imperative of resolving the Organization's financial crisis. But in order to carry out those reforms, we need to have a clear-sighted appreciation of the international scene and to adapt the Organization to that reality, so that we can achieve a fruitful and forward-looking perspective. It is necessary for States, in the framework of the United Nations system, to overcome their traditional activities and jointly engage in tasks to deal with those new realities so as to achieve broader representation and functionality, with the possibility of future growth.

When the United Nations was founded in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, international relations were different from today. The end of the cold war and the realities of regional integration have made necessary a new vision of the relationship between State sovereignty and the supra-national realities of the international system. Huge social and economic challenges make it necessary for us to persevere in pursuing the purposes and principles of the Charter, to strengthen diplomatic action, and not to succumb to arbitrary interpretations of international legality, which undermine the indispensable primacy of international law.

Today the inadequacy of the nation State is more evident than ever, and the appreciation of supranational structures is more widespread than in the past. We discard the simplistic visions of pure internationalism, but we uphold the validity, of the entities that are active today alongside or above State sovereignty. The vitality of the Andean Common Market, the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the European Union shows us a future of common and vigorous legal international arrangements. We are facing the definitive crisis of nationalism, if not of full legal competence of the nation State. International law today appears as the only framework of standards with which to face the new realities.

There can be no doubt that the nuclear reality was one of the factors that transformed the traditional concept of the nation State. The ability to foresee its results has made the decision to accept war more exceptional, and non-atomic armies have adhered to broader, supranational military organizations. Atomic weapons have abolished the impermeability of the nation State.

We are likewise faced with a crisis of the very concept of borders. Traditionally, empires thought of themselves only in terms of being an extension of their borders. Today borders are not an obstacle to integration. However, this does not imply that we are building a universal State, a global "cosmocracy". There are natural limits to the territorial applicability of laws, and it is true that the concentration of power has unbreachable limits, beyond which it cannot go. Accordingly, history has so far not led us to a universal State, but rather to a freer structure, a complex political pluralism with a common general foundation of representative democracy, individual liberties and economic freedom. We are facing new, functionally limited supra-statal powers, with different arrangements that differ in scope and intensity and that are superimposed upon the system of State borders.

The modern theory of the State forged by Machiavelli and Bodin, the concept of the State as an absolute power that excludes any other power, is today fading. For more than 20 years States have recognized forces superior to themselves. The idea of the unlimited sovereign State has broken down; the linchpin of the whole theory of the modern State has broken down. Today sovereignty continues to exist, but not as unlimited political power, but rather as full constitutional legal competence. That seventeenth-century concept that inspired the Peace of Westphalia, *cuius regio eius religio* — that each State should have a religion — has been left behind. This is more apparent than ever at the end of the cold war, when the secular beliefs that confronted the world have been discarded. Today the cohesion of human societies is governed by universal concepts.

The new reality leads us to assert that State sovereignty has already been made subject to international law — and, it can be said, to natural law — thus negating the theoretical legitimacy of the State that was born with the modern age. This in no way means that there is no longer a need for patriotism, the concept of fatherland or national histories. It means, instead, that the myth of the nationalist State has collapsed.

In a truly human breakthrough and not a purely technological one, all moral values today are reduced to their personal roots. Today, neither Governments nor the governed can shirk the ethical imperatives that rule equally over their public and private conduct. This is due both to the process just outlined and to a wholly new and far-reaching technological revolution in mass communications.

The law of nations was at first a principle of commercial intercourse. It later came to apply to only one kind of actor: the nation State. Today, an open functional regionalism is bringing about far-reaching changes that are swiftly altering the existing order, and the United Nations would be ill-advised to disregard that new reality in strengthening the Security Council and reforming its institutions.

This is the cornerstone upon which the United Nations should be re-founded, now that the circumstances of power which governed its life at the close of the Second World War and during the cold war have been overcome. We should not lose sight of the fact that, although the act of consent that forged this new, open, functional regionalism was the work of the nation State, today that regionalism is already a supranational reality

that has taken on a life of its own and is spreading around the world. Inter-statal balances of power are giving way to regional balances of power that are not concentrated in a single focal point of power and that are more decentralized and more rational.

The future will be one in which an international system with freer and more flexible structures will be based on the freedom of man as an individual, as a person. This obliges States, within the framework of the United Nations system, to go beyond their traditional activities and jointly engage in management activities in the Organization based on the new cultural, economic and geographical reality made up of broad functional regional areas. I say once again: this is the keystone of the foundation of the new edifice of the United Nations.

I have come here to reiterate the commitment of Peru and of the Peruvian people to the United Nations, but also to warn that the new realities that must not be ignored. Those realities have guided the policy of President Alberto Fujimori and are the inspiration for his Government's far-reaching and successful reform. Peru, in its continental relations, today bases its foreign policy upon the principles of open functional regionalism and strives to link the Pacific with the Atlantic through supranational arrangements.

Rooted in its rich Latin-American heritage, my country sees its future in continental terms, drawing upon Latin America's important contribution in the area of integration, international law and mechanisms for peace and security. Accordingly, we are convinced that organizational changes in the United Nations should be based on those same principles.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): The General Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Mr. Abdellatif Filali, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco, Mr. Abdellatif Filali, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Filali (Morocco) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset I would like, on behalf of my country, to congratulate the President sincerely, and the friendly country of Malaysia, on his election to preside over the General Assembly at its fifty-first session. His competence and profound knowledge of international affairs will clearly contribute to the achievement of the expected results of the session. I should like to take this opportunity to assure him that the delegation of the Kingdom of Morocco will provide its full support and assistance in order to achieve those results.

I would also like to express my deep appreciation to Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for the wisdom with which he guided the proceedings of the fiftieth session and for his commendable efforts in connection with the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

Although the cold war ended a few years ago, and despite the hopes of the peoples of the world that a new international era would dawn in which they could reap the benefits and dividends of peace and take part on an equal footing in the guidance and management of international affairs in order to preserve their ideals, values and interests, we note that the current world situation is characterized by instability and confusion and is far from reflecting the order we so hoped to achieve. Indeed, far from bringing peace, security and justice, the end of the cold war spawned a situation in which local crises have brought suffering to millions of people in several regions of the world, severely stirring our global conscience. These crises have also highlighted the inability of the international community to devise effective mechanisms to resolve such conflicts in an equitable way and to put an end to the tragedies they engender.

Morocco believes that the Secretary-General's initiative for restructuring the United Nations and strengthening its role falls precisely within this perspective and can prepare the Organization to deal with the effects of these conflicts through preventive diplomacy, the development and reform of United Nations bodies, and coordination between the United Nations and other international and regional organizations. We are, moreover, convinced that the re-election of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali to a second term as Secretary-General would be the best guarantee

for the continuation of those reforms. The Secretary-General's experience, competence, courage and spirit of initiative in settling international conflicts and reactivating international cooperation in various fields, make him the best choice to guide the affairs of the Organization during a second mandate. Morocco also hopes that any controversy on the subject will be avoided in order to forestall adverse repercussions on the work of this session and on the future of the Organization.

The commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization provided an opportunity for the numerous Heads of State who attended the celebration to express concerns and apprehensions regarding the challenges confronting us. They issued a Declaration that contained their proposals and recommendations for meeting those challenges and devising effective mechanisms to promote closer relations among countries. In our view, this session provides us an opportunity to reflect on those recommendations and proposals and to find answers to the questions raised by the Heads of State regarding the fundamental and structural reforms of the United Nations.

With regard to the Security Council and its prerogatives in discharging its mandate to maintain international peace and security, we believe that any initiative aimed at expanding the membership of the Security Council and improving its modes of action would require much thought and circumspection. It must take into account current realities if any final decision in this regard is to lead to the desired reform and thereby guarantee equitable representation of all continents. The aim here is to ensure the Council's efficiency and credibility and to enhance its ability to cope with any violation of international law without impinging on the prerogatives and role of the General Assembly.

However, any reform that does not take into account the current financial difficulties of the Organization clearly cannot produce the expected results. It will be extremely difficult for the United Nations to fulfil its mission without a stable financial base. Hence the need for all Member States to pay their contributions, settle their arrears and thereby give concrete substance to their collective and continued support for the efforts of the Organization.

In the field of disarmament, many important steps have been taken in the control of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons. Following the establishment of nuclear-free zones in Latin America and the South Pacific and the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the African countries signed a Treaty making Africa a nuclear-free continent. In addition to these achievements, we hope to see the Middle East also become a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and of nuclear weapons in particular.

Moreover, following the success of the efforts to produce the final version, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty will be open for signature tomorrow. Morocco, which made an important contribution to the drafting of the Treaty, is convinced that this document will open the way for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, strengthen international cooperation and promote the exchange of knowledge about the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, so that developing countries can achieve their economic and technical goals.

Morocco's interest in this subject is predicated on its acute awareness of the risks involved and that arms control is the cornerstone of any initiative aimed at firmly establishing the basis for international peace and security throughout the world. Humanity can be sheltered from the tragedy of massively destructive wars only through the full and complete elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons under effective international control.

Last year, I told this Assembly that the efforts of the Kingdom of Morocco to achieve territorial integrity had gone through a series of phases unique in the history of the independence of nations. The time has come for Morocco to recover all its territories.

Being fully committed to peace and to the settlement of problems through dialogue, and having continually defended this principle in international forums as a means for resolving problems between nations, Morocco is convinced that the return of the cities of Ceuta and Melilla and of the neighbouring islands still under Spanish occupation can only occur through those same means. This is particularly true given the common interests and the well-established and good-neighbourly relations existing between Morocco and Spain. This is, moreover, precisely what His Majesty King Hassan II took the initiative to underscore when he called for the establishment of a Moroccan-Spanish think tank definitively to resolve this question.

Accordingly, the final, complete solution we are advocating is one which preserves Moroccan sovereignty on the territories it holds, while guaranteeing Spanish interests. This would further consolidate the dynamics of the diverse and close cooperation between the northern

and southern shores of the Mediterranean. We are also convinced that our age-old relations with neighbouring Spain will be instrumental in finding a permanent solution to this question.

The developments in the Middle East over the past few years opened prospects of tolerance and coexistence for the peoples of the region, instead of dissension and fighting. We view the progress that has been made as an auspicious sign in that regard, starting with the Madrid Conference and the Oslo agreements and progressing to the Palestinian-Israeli agreement and the Jordanian-Israeli agreement.

Morocco has contributed to giving life to the concept of peace in the region, and has made tireless efforts to establish a comprehensive, just and lasting peace that would guarantee the return of all occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif, the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace. We therefore regret the interruption of the peace process, which threatens to destroy all the efforts we have made to establish security and stability in the region.

We have the right to wonder whether the principles and commitments agreed upon at the Madrid Conference, which provided the groundwork for the process towards establishing a just and comprehensive peace in the region, have become outdated, not to say null and void. Has the new Israeli Government, which seeks to cast doubt on those principles and commitments, realized the disastrous consequences of such a course of action, which could take the region and its peoples back to a situation we thought was behind us thanks to an irreversible commitment and a new perception of the region's future?

We believe in peace and are dedicated to its defence and maintenance as an irreversible option and goal. My country has contributed to this mission of its own free will and in good faith. Similarly, we have on many occasions pointed out that genuine security for all the countries of the region can be achieved only through the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace which guarantees the rights of all parties in the region.

In this respect, we call for scrupulous and unequivocal commitment, with no delays, to all that has been agreed upon, in order to implement the agreements reached according to the scheduled phases of the peace process. We also call for removing the obstacles impeding the bilateral Arab-Israeli negotiations so that we may keep abreast of the substantial progress made in the multilateral peace process in order to achieve the desired final solution.

The blockade imposed on the Palestinian territories, which hinders even the delivery of international assistance to the Palestinian people, makes it particularly difficult for the Palestinian Authority to discharge its obligations to its people, who are living in extremely difficult conditions. In addition, the colonization policy applied by Israel and the changes it is introducing in the old part of the city of Al-Quds and neighbouring areas constitute a violation of the United Nations resolutions, principles and commitments to which I referred earlier.

In this respect, we call for a lifting of this blockade and for providing full material support and assistance to the Palestinian Authority, in accordance with the decisions taken by the international community, so that the Authority can discharge its mission in the best possible conditions and launch the process of the economic development of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in order to enable the Palestinian people to establish their independent State, with Al-Quds as its capital, and to contribute, on equal footing, to the progress, cooperation and prosperity of the region.

The Gulf crisis has long cast a dark shadow on the region and created crisis conditions. We have repeatedly called for transcending these conditions through the implementation of internationally binding resolutions within the framework of ensuring the security and stability of the region and preserving the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries of the region. We are convinced that this situation cannot continue indefinitely.

The prospects for an easing of the crisis are beginning to emerge, based on the progress made in the implementation of Security Council resolutions, and the understanding reached by Iraq and the United Nations on the implementation of resolution 986 (1995), known as the oil-for-food resolution. We regret the latest developments in the Gulf region, which are likely to once again plunge that area into a spiral of instability and postpone the implementation of that resolution. As we call for restraint and calm in order to avoid any escalation, we reaffirm the need to respect Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to implement Security Council resolution 986 (1995), in order to alleviate the hardships of the Iraqi people, who are still suffering from the embargo which has been imposed on them for the last six years.

The problem of the United Arab Emirate islands of the Greater and the Lesser Tunbs and Abu Musa has not yet been resolved. Given the relationship of kinship and brotherhood between us and the United Arab Emirates, and given our historic and brotherly relations with Iran, we call upon the two neighbouring countries to find a definitive solution to this crisis on the basis of respect for the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over its islands and respect for its territorial integrity, in keeping with the relations of neighbourliness and the traditional ties existing between the two countries. These ties should be exploited to the benefit of the peoples of the Emirates and Iran and to achieve stability in the region.

Morocco attaches special importance to the conflict between Libya and certain Western countries because of its repercussions on international and regional relations. In this connection, we regretfully note the implications of the measures imposed on Libya and their extensive damaging effects on the Libyan people and on the economies of neighbouring countries. The continuation of this situation has been a source of concern.

Morocco, which is interested in seeing this problem settled amicably, calls for a favourable response to the initiatives and efforts made by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Arab League, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference to find a solution to this crisis.

The world has followed with very keen interest the international efforts aimed at restoring peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These efforts have rekindled hope and provided an opportunity to put an end to the conflict in the region and to the crimes against humanity that have claimed tens of thousands of Bosnian lives. Morocco fully supports the Bosnian people and their just cause, including the preservation of their sovereignty, territorial integrity and identity, and has never hesitated, in its current capacity as Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, to shoulder its responsibilities to help the Bosnian people overcome their ordeal. Thus, we worked to set up a coordination mechanism between the Islamic Contact Group and the International Contact Group, which contributed to bringing about the official signing, at the Paris Conference, of the Dayton Agreement, which aims at putting an end to the bloodshed in the region, finding a comprehensive, just and lasting solution, instilling respect for international legality, and contributing to stability in the region. My country has also met its international obligations through its participation in the Implementation Force, thereby contributing to the establishment of security and stability in that region.

We are gratified to note the substantial progress made in the implementation of the military aspects of the Dayton Agreement and the launching of the construction of political institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that the legislative elections held recently will constitute yet another constructive step towards preserving the territorial integrity and political unity of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and achieving harmony and concord among the country's various constituents in order to secure its stability and development.

The current world economic situation clearly reveals the wide gap between developed and developing countries, as well as the increasing marginalization of the latter in the international economic arena. This unbalanced situation threatens to lead to conflicts among countries arising out of economic and development considerations and could thus adversely affect world stability.

Given the staggering increase in external debt and its negative repercussions on the economies of the developing countries, there is an urgent need today to find adequate solutions to this situation, which is mortgaging the future of the developing countries. Such solutions can be achieved only through the creation of conditions more conducive to increasing equal opportunities among the countries of the world and a genuine partnership that can pave the way towards the achievement of balanced and lasting development.

In this context, we once again welcome the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General in the "Agenda for Development". We hope that it will lead to positive results, redress the imbalance and help to achieve the economic development sought by the developing countries.

The changes affecting the international economic scene following the crystallization of the concept of economic globalization and the liberalization of trade-mandate corrective measures require that the existing disproportion be corrected, particularly since the behaviour of certain developed countries in trade liberalization is still marked by a selective approach. Moreover, protectionist measures and the institution of covert barriers in the guise of various environmental and

other considerations are inconsistent with the desirable policy of liberalization of international trade.

We hope that the task of redressing these imbalances will feature prominently among the concerns of the World Trade Organization in the near future and that a balance may be struck between freedom of trade and development requirements.

If a solution is to be found, the role of international financial institutions must be extensively reassessed in view of the deep changes affecting the international scene. Accordingly, we call for the implementation of the provisions of World Trade Organization agreements and for careful thought to be given to defining the concepts of globalization that now determine the very future of nations, peoples and, indeed, entire continents. This could be done by means of financial and economic transactions designed to close the gap between countries and to overcome the marginalization from which many of them suffer, particularly in Africa.

We keenly hope that the meeting of the World Trade Organization at Singapore in December will provide an opportunity to assess the situation and to enter into a more careful consideration of the consistency of economic, financial and monetary policies, for which Morocco has been calling for some time.

The deterioration in the situation on the African continent is most certainly at the forefront of issues demanding a joint effort on the part of the international community. Effective and practical solutions must be found for the serious economic, social and humanitarian problems facing African States, which have been compounded by tragedies such as civil war, the spread of epidemics and deadly diseases, desertification, refugee problems and all they entail.

Morocco, as a country on the African continent that enjoys deep-rooted historical and other ties with other African States, takes a keen interest in the continent's problems. Bearing in mind those ancient ties and our special political relations, my country has contributed, within the means available to it, to the development of Africa through the establishment of bilateral cultural and technical cooperation with the States of the continent.

Morocco will therefore spare no effort to develop and consolidate bilateral cooperation with African States to help the African continent overcome its problems and emerge from marginalization.

During the Marrakesh Ministerial Meeting of the Uruguay Round in 1994, His Majesty King Hassan II was the first to call for the introduction of a "Marshall Plan" for Africa and to stress the need for greater international efforts to help African States develop their economies and become integrated into the world economy.

In this framework, we welcome the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. In our opinion, we should do our utmost to help this Initiative succeed by ensuring that both the United Nations and the international community provide the necessary financial and technical support.

With regard to what is known as the question of Western Sahara, I would like to affirm, as I have done many times before, Morocco's commitment and unswerving willingness to implement the United Nations Settlement Plan which guarantees the right of all people from the Sahara to express their will through a referendum.

It has now become clear to everyone that since the end of last year, the United Nations Plan has reached a deadlock. We hope that this stalemate will end as soon as possible so that the Settlement Plan can be carried out on the basis of a referendum.

As the twenty-first century comes into view, the world hopes that tomorrow will bring a brighter future characterized by peace, cooperation and brotherhood among peoples. As we stand on the threshold of a new century, we need to strengthen the United Nations and consolidate its capabilities so that it can keep up with the changes taking place and respond to people's desire for security, justice and development.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French)*: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Nicaragua, His Excellency Mr. Ernesto Leal.

Mr. Leal (Nicaragua) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on his election to preside over the Assembly this session. We are convinced that he will guide our work successfully. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral for his work.

In 1990, when Mrs. Violeta Barrios de Chamorro became President of Nicaragua, the country was in a state of war. Negotiating the demobilization of more than

20,000 people who had taken up arms and reducing an army of over 90,000 soldiers were key tasks in ending a civil war that had lasted almost 10 years. This complicated pacification process was just the beginning of a process of peace, reconciliation, democracy and development in Nicaragua aimed at bringing the country into line with the new situation in the region and the globalization of international relations.

As part of this process, we began to modernize the State, curbed hyper-inflation, liberalized the pricing system and did away with the State monopoly in the areas of foreign trade and finance, where we have managed to privatize almost all the companies that used to belong to the State.

As the State apparatus was reduced, we began to decentralize government and transfer responsibilities to municipal and community levels and to sectors in which the private sector could clearly be much more effective.

We have carried out the process of peace and reconciliation that was essential for democratic national consolidation. We have stabilized the economy and reduced the external debt, although, unfortunately, it is still a great burden.

One of the main concerns of the Government of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro has been to ensure that the human rights of the entire population of Nicaragua are respected. To this end, we have adopted legislative and administrative provisions that have rid Nicaraguan jails of murder, torture and impunity.

We have set up new institutions that encourage education, trade and banking. We have introduced a new, much more effective, social security system. We have allocated more of our budget to primary and technical education, and we can be proud of the unlimited freedom of the press in Nicaragua today. We have also managed to establish civilian control over the military, which will be another important bequest to the new Government.

Today our country enjoys the greatest degree of political freedom in its history. Considerable progress has been made in institutionalizing democracy, and the resources that in the past we Nicaraguans used for war are now once again being used for education, health and the building of housing and roads — in other words, for the comprehensive development of Nicaragua.

Democracy in Nicaragua was born in 1990, with the election of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro in the only truly free election ever enjoyed by the Nicaraguan population in its history. At that difficult time, we Nicaraguans accepted the challenge of sowing the seeds of a new culture of peace. The United Nations played a very important role in this process of achieving democracy and opening up a new era for Nicaragua. In the same spirit, the United Nations is now cooperating with us and providing guidance for the elections later this year.

Since 1990 major changes have occurred at the world level. Many countries have rid themselves of oppression and dictatorship. The Iron Curtain has been torn down, as have the walls of ideological intolerance. The foundations of apartheid have crumbled, and in the Middle East a peace process is unfolding, filling us with hope, although it is not without problems. Major sacrifices have been made by peoples under totalitarian regimes so as to win the right to live in peace and freedom in a more secure world — a fairer, more peaceful, tolerant and democratic one.

However, we see that new crises and armed conflicts have arisen in other regions of the world. Because of its international character, the United Nations is duty-bound to face up to the challenges of security required by the current situation; our Organization's global agenda allows it to operate more dynamically. The United Nations must confront issues such as the eradication of poverty, environmental degradation, terrorism, the use and trafficking of drugs, violence suffered by women and the promotion of democratic values and progress in social development. Nicaragua is convinced that peace and democracy are closely related to development, and that without economic development it is extremely difficult to achieve sustainable democracy.

In the Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace" we have a summary of the important changes that have occurred in recent years. He sets forth the difficult conditions of hunger and poverty among other things, still existing in developing countries. He also recognizes that the burden of debt and barriers to international trade are still a danger to world stability. All this makes the development of the new concept of international security more difficult — as discussed right here in the United Nations. The Secretary-General's "An Agenda for Peace" is a mechanism to help us bring about true, comprehensive peace.

Let us recall, as was stated today by the Prime Minister of Norway, that peace is no longer only something that States must seek from one another. We must seek peace within each State as well.

The sensitive mission of the United Nations at this new stage of its development can be illustrated by its dynamic role in Central America, a region that in 1992 was declared by this very General Assembly to be an area of peace, freedom, democracy and development.

No one doubts that the United Nations has begun a major process of profound transformation and renewal, taking place precisely 50 years after its establishment and reflecting the current international situation. With this renewal we hope for greater democratization of our world Organization, particularly in the Security Council. We also hope for the admission of new Members to the Organization, such as the Republic of China on Taiwan, which meets the requirements set forth in the Charter to be a Member State, but whose right to be a Member is still denied it. Likewise, we are expecting the United Nations to contribute to developing countries, particularly through programmes of technical cooperation and cooperation for development.

During these last few years of transition, while we have been establishing and consolidating peace and democracy in Nicaragua, world disarmament has accelerated. Budgets for armaments have been reduced in many countries, and we, the Governments of Central America, have adopted some serious initiatives as regards the production, use and transfer of anti-personnel mines. We have also declared Central America to be a region completely free of those devices.

Areas that were once battlegrounds, including Nicaragua, are now seeing demining operations with good prospects. At the same time, several nuclear-weapon States have initiated moratoriums on testing, thus greatly diminishing the possibility of a devastating nuclear war.

We have also seen an increase in the number of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The signing of the Pelindaba Treaty establishes a zone of this kind in Africa; and with the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia we will be strengthening the potential for a more secure world. It is important to recall that very recently we adopted by an overwhelming majority, right here at United Nations Headquarters, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

We are seriously concerned that much of the recent political progress achieved throughout the world is not necessarily in tune with progress in the economic sphere. Developing countries continue to face serious problems such as extreme poverty and unemployment. Access to new international markets continues to be limited for our products. The burden of debt is unbearable, and the constant inequalities in international financial systems continue to affect our countries adversely. Therefore, we must urgently establish much fairer and more equitable international economic relations.

We are also concerned that during this same period of global, regional and national transition, new forms of intolerance, lack of understanding and violation of human rights have breached the peace in certain areas of the world. Such is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Somalia and Rwanda, where events have profoundly disturbed the human conscience.

In this same regard, Nicaragua is troubled by recent events in Burundi, where in spite of the efforts of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the international community, the situation remains delicate. On the other hand, the efforts made towards reaching peace in Chechnya hearten us.

We are concerned at the continuation of practices and their pernicious effects. We believe that their perpetrators should be brought to justice without exception. We condemn attacks such as that upon President Mubarak of Egypt and the recent one in Dharan, Saudi Arabia, in which hundreds of innocent people were wounded. We feel great solidarity with the victims and their families.

Nicaragua is concerned at the growth in the production, consumption and traffic in drugs, and in the growing relationship between terrorism and weapons trafficking, which, like drug trafficking, continues to pose a major threat to future generations.

For these reasons, I would like to state that Nicaragua was pleased to hear the proposal made by the President of Colombia regarding the need to develop a global agenda for drugs. We believe that the United Nations should think hard about that important initiative.

On the eve of the twenty-first century, the international community as a whole should seek out ways and means to overcome all of these situations. We should

make our best efforts in that regard. Nicaragua is ready to support the international community in these initiatives.

In July 1994, the second International Conference of New and Restored Democracies was held in Managua, Nicaragua; its main objective was to study in a frank and objective manner the weaknesses, prospects and challenges of new democracies. On this occasion, on behalf of my country and in our capacity of interim secretariat of the Conference, I would like to urge that the third conference of new democracies, which will be held next year in Bucharest, Romania, receive the international community's special attention.

In this ongoing quest for peace and for the strengthening of democracy, we in Central America are putting into practice a new model of regional security. The outstanding features of this new model have been embodied in the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, which is a national and regional strategy to foster a change in personal and social attitudes to ensure the establishment of a model of sustainable development in the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental fields.

We Central Americans have already ratified a framework treaty for democratic security which deals with respect for and the promotion and protection of human rights. Its provisions ensure the security of the Central American States and their inhabitants through the establishment of conditions which will allow them their personal, family and social development in peace, freedom and democracy. These are initiatives which could be studied in other regions with the aim of strengthening national processes within the context of new circumstances and with the objective of moving towards a new international order which will be more secure, to which we all aspire.

Only months away from the end of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro's term of office and less than one month from the elections in which her successor will be chosen, we are very satisfied with the work carried out during this period. World and regional events have had, and will continue to have, their impact within countries. In the case of Nicaragua, this impact has been highly positive. By the end of its term, our Government will have left Nicaragua completely different from the Nicaragua we found in 1990.

We are certain that whoever is elected President in the coming elections will have the necessary vision to establish, as it has done in the past, a Government of benefit to all Nicaraguans. Thus, we believe that extensive democratic consolidation should also continue in order to continue on the path of peace, harmony and progress.

On behalf of President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro, I would like to ask the international community and the United Nations to continue supporting Nicaragua, for the good of democracy, for the good of our country, and, above all, for the good of the international community.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the people and Government of Nicaragua and on my own behalf to thank the States, the Governments, the international organizations and non-governmental organizations which, in one way or another, have lent our country their cooperation and solidarity. Without this solidarity we Nicaraguans would never have been able to achieve the democracy we have today, nor would we have been able to lay the foundation for economic development. To all of them and to all of you, members of the Assembly, thank you very much.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting. I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gomersall (United Kingdom): On behalf of the United Kingdom, I would like to say a few words today in response to the remarks made by the Foreign Minister of Argentina concerning the Falkland Islands. We were glad that the Foreign Minister again referred to the increasing cooperation between the United Kingdom and Argentina, which characterizes our bilateral relationship. My Government sincerely hopes that the progress which has been achieved will be built on and further developed. But my Government does not accept the Foreign Minister's remarks about sovereignty. We have no doubt about Britain's sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the other British territories in the South Atlantic.

In the Falkland Islands we must heed the wishes of the people. Many families trace their ancestry in the Falklands back for five or six generations. The elected representatives of the islanders, some of whom visited the United Nations for the debate in the Committee of 24 last July, have expressed their views clearly and on many occasions. They have stated their belief in their right to self-determination to live under a Government of their choice and, as a democratic voice of the Falkland Islands people, they have reiterated their view that they do not want to be part of Argentina.

Despite our differences with Argentina on the subject of sovereignty, we are continuing a constructive dialogue with the Government of Argentina on, for example, hydrocarbons development and fisheries in the South Atlantic. A further round of talks at the official and ministerial level aimed at making further progress on these and other issues will take place in New York this week. We value these practical steps to develop United Kingdom-Argentine cooperation benefitting the islands. We hold these discussions while maintaining our position regarding the issue of sovereignty over the Falklands.

Mrs. Gazeau-Secret (*interpretation from French*): The French delegation must object to the statements made by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea regarding the territories of French Polynesia and Walis and Futuna. The populations of these territories continue to indicate in the most democratic possible way that they are part of the French Republic. Therefore, from the point of view of my delegation, the questions raised by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea are pointless.

Mr. Westendorp (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Spanish delegation must intervene in the exercise the right of reply, and wishes to refer to the references to the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla and to other parts of Spanish territory, made this afternoon by the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Cooperation of the Kingdom of Morocco.

Such statements do not reflect reality, as they refer to Spanish territories whose citizens are represented in the Spanish Parliament with the same rights and under the same conditions as the rest of their compatriots. Parallels cannot be made with other situations of a fundamentally different nature. Such references are out of step with the close overall relationship that today exists between the Kingdoms of Spain and Morocco, both bilaterally and in the region to which we, as neighbours, belong.

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Having listened to the statement made by the United Kingdom, Argentina would like to reaffirm the statement made this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Guido Di Tella.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.

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General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

6th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 24 September 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Address by Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the United States of America.

Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the United States of America, His Excellency Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clinton: Three years ago I had the honour of being the first American President born after the founding of the United Nations to address the General Assembly. In its fifty-first year, the United Nations has not yet realized all its founders' aspirations. But the ideals of the United Nations Charter — peace, freedom, tolerance and prosperity — now touch more people in more nations than ever before.

Now we find ourselves at a turning point in history when the blocs and barriers that long defined the world are giving way to an age of remarkable possibility — a time when more of our children and more nations will be able to live out their dreams than ever before. But this is also an age of new threats — threats from terrorists, from rogue States that support them, threats from ethnic, religious, racial and tribal hatreds, threats from international criminals and drug traffickers — all of whom will be more dangerous if they gain access to weapons of mass destruction.

The challenge before us, plainly, is twofold: to seize the new opportunities for more people to enjoy peace and freedom, security and prosperity and to move strongly and swiftly against the dangers that change has produced.

This week and in this place, we take a giant step forward. By overwhelming global consensus, we will make a solemn commitment to end all nuclear tests for all time.

Before entering this Hall, I had the great honour to be the first leader to sign the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). I did so, with some pride, with this pen, for this pen is the very one that President Kennedy used to help bring the limited test-ban Treaty to life 33 years ago.

This Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty will help prevent the nuclear Powers from developing more advanced and more dangerous weapons. It will limit the ability of other States to acquire such devices themselves. It points us towards a century in which the roles and risks of nuclear weapons can be further reduced and ultimately eliminated.

I want to thank all those who helped bring us to this day, especially the Chairman of the comprehensive test-

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ban negotiating Committee, Netherlands Ambassador Ramaker, and the Government of Australia, which took the lead at the United Nations.

I thank the Secretary-General for the remarks he made this morning in establishing the criteria and standards in support of the United Nations as the depository of the Treaty.

The signatures of the world's declared nuclear Powers — the United States, China, France, Russia and the United Kingdom — along with those of the vast majority of its nations, will immediately create an international norm against nuclear testing even before the Treaty formally enters into force.

The CTBT is the shared work of hard negotiation. Some have complained that it does not mandate total nuclear disarmament by a date certain. I would say to them: "Do not forsake the benefits of this achievement by ignoring the tremendous progress we have already made towards that goal." Today there are no Russian missiles pointed at America and no American missiles pointed at Russia.

Through the START Treaties we are cutting our nuclear arsenals by two thirds. Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakstan are giving up the nuclear weapons left on their land after the Soviet Union dissolved.

We are working with the newly independent States to improve security at nuclear facilities and to convert nuclear weapons to peaceful uses.

The United States and other nuclear-weapon States have embraced the South Pacific and African nuclear-free zones. Now half the world's land area is nuclear free by international agreement. And the world community extended indefinitely the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

Yet some of the very changes that had made this progress possible have also created new risks. The breakup of the Soviet Union left nuclear materials dispersed throughout the newly independent States. As barriers have come down around the world the danger of nuclear smuggling has gone up. So even as we reduce the global stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, we must also reduce the danger that lethal materials could wind up in the wrong hands, while developing effective defences for our people if that should happen.

The United States has six priority goals to further lift the threat of nuclear weapons destruction and the threat of weapons of mass destruction, and to limit their dangerous spread.

First, we must protect our people from chemical attack and make it harder for rogue States and terrorists to brandish poison gas by bringing the chemical weapons Convention into force as soon as possible. I thank the nations here that have ratified the chemical weapons Convention. I deeply regret that the United States Senate has not yet voted on the Convention, but I want to assure you and people throughout the world that I will not let this treaty die, and we will join the ranks of nation determined to prevent the spread of chemical weapons.

Secondly, we must reduce the risk that an outlaw State or organization could build a nuclear device by negotiating a treaty to freeze the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. The Conference on Disarmament should take up this challenge immediately. The United States, Russia, France and the United Kingdom already have halted production of fissile materials for weapons. I urge other nations to end the unsafeguarded production of these materials pending completion of the treaty.

Thirdly, we must continue to reduce our nuclear arsenals. When Russia ratifies START II, President Yeltsin and I are all ready to discuss the possibilities of further cuts, as well as limiting and monitoring nuclear warheads and materials. This will help make deep reductions irreversible.

Fourthly, we must reinforce our efforts against the spread of nuclear weapons by strengthening the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). We should give the International Atomic Energy Agency a stronger role and sharper tools for conducting worldwide inspections. Our law enforcement and customs officials should cooperate more in the fight against nuclear smuggling. And I urge all nations that have not signed the NPT to do so without delay.

Fifthly, we must better protect our people from those who would use disease as a weapon of war, by giving the biological weapons Convention the means to strengthen compliance, including on-site investigations when we believe such weapons may have been used or when suspicious outbreaks of disease occur. We should aim to complete this task by 1998.

Finally, we must end the carnage caused by anti-personnel landmines, the hidden killers that murder and maim more than 25,000 people a year. In May, I announced a series of actions the United States would take towards this goal. Today, I renew my appeal for the swift negotiation of a worldwide ban on the use, stockpiling, production, and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Our children deserve to walk the Earth in safety.

Thirty-three years ago, at the height of the cold war, President Kennedy spoke at American University in Washington. Peace was the topic of his address, but not an abstract ideal of peace. Instead, he urged us to focus on

> "a more practical, attainable peace — based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions — on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interests of all concerned."

It was in that same speech that he announced that talks would shortly begin in Moscow on a comprehensive test-ban treaty.

President Kennedy's vision exceeded the possibilities of his time, but his words speak to us still. As we sign our names to the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty — the longest-sought, hardest-fought prize in arms control history — let us summon the confidence of earlier pioneers and set our sights on the challenges of the new century.

Over the past three years we have moved in the right direction in meeting those challenges. In Bosnia, where the war is over and where just 10 days ago its people went to the polls in peace, we have moved in the right direction. Now we must help Bosnia build a unified, democratic, and peaceful future.

In Haiti, where the dictators are gone, democracy is back and the exodus of refugees has ended, we have move in the right direction. Now we must help the Haitian people seize the full benefits of freedom and forge a more prosperous future. In the Middle East and in Northern Ireland, there is progress towards lasting peace, and we are moving in the right direction. Now we must support continued progress between Israel and Palestinians, and we must broaden the circle of peace to include more of Israel's neighbours. We must help to give the children of Belfast the chance to live out normal lives.

In the fact that democracy, open markets and peace are taking hold around the world, we are moving in the right direction. Here in the Americas, every nation but one has raised freedom's flag. In Central Europe, in Russia, Ukraine and the other new independent States, the forces of reform have earned all our respect and will continue to have the support of the United States. Now we must begin to welcome Europe's new democracies into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), strengthen NATO's partnership with Russia and build a secure and undivided Europe.

In Asia, South Korea, Japan, China and America working together persuaded North Korea to freeze its nuclear programme under international monitoring. Now, in the wake of provocative actions by North Korea, we must pursue a permanent peace for all the Korean people. Our planet is safer because of our common efforts to close Chernobyl, to address the challenges of climate change, to protect the world's forests and oceans. Now we must uphold our duty as custodians of our environment so that our children will inherit an even healthier planet.

All of us must continue our historic efforts to build a better, more global trading system for the twenty-first century. We have made remarkable progress, but there is more to do in opening markets, in creating millions of new jobs for all our people.

In this time of challenge and change, the United Nations is more important than ever before, because our world is more interdependent than ever before. Most Americans know this. Unfortunately, some Americans, in their longing to be free of the world's problems, and perhaps to focus more on our own problems, ignore what the United Nations has done, ignore the benefits of cooperation. They ignore our own interdependence with all of you in charting a better future. They ignore all that the United Nations is doing to lift the lives of millions by preserving the peace, vaccinating children, caring for refugees, sharing the blessings of progress around the world. They have made it difficult for the United States to meet its obligations to the United Nations. But let me reassure all of you: the vast majority of Americans support the United Nations, not only because it reflects our own ideals, but because it reinforces our interests. We must continue to work to manifest the support that our people feel. For the fifty-first year in a row, the United States will be the largest financial contributor to the United Nations. We are paying our dues, and I am committed to paying off our accumulated obligations. However, we also support the process of reform, which has done great work in reforming and streamlining the

bureaucracy and reining in the budget, and it should continue.

We also believe that all of us — the nations of the world working together — must do more to fight terrorism. Last year I asked the nations assembled here to commit to a goal of zero tolerance for aggression, terrorism and lawless behaviour. Frankly, we have not done that yet. Real zero tolerance means giving no aid and no quarter to terrorists who slaughter the innocent and drug traffickers who poison our children, and doing everything we can to prevent weapons of mass destruction from falling into the wrong hands. Real zero tolerance requires us to isolate States that refuse to play by the rules we have all accepted for civilized behaviour. As long as Iraq threatens its neighbours and its people, as long as Iran supports and protects terrorists, as long as Libya refuses to give up the people who blew up Pan Am 103, they should not become full members of the family of nations.

The United States is pursuing a three-part strategy against terrorists: abroad, by working more closely than ever with like-minded nations; at home by giving our law enforcement the toughest counter-terrorism tools available, and by doing all we can to make our airports and the aeroplanes that link us all together even safer. I have requested more than $1 billion from our Congress to meet these commitments, and we are implementing the United States Vice President's aviation security plan to make those travelling to, from and within the United States more secure.

There are other steps we must take together. Last year, I urged that together we crack down on money laundering and front companies, shut down gray markets for guns, explosives and false documents, open more law enforcement centres around the world and strengthen safeguards on lethal materials. In each of these areas we have made progress, through the United Nations, at the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm el-Sheikh, at the Paris terrorism conference and individually.

Now we should adopt the declaration on crime and public security I proposed last year. It includes a no-sanctuary pledge, so that we can say with one voice to the terrorists, criminals and drug traffickers: "You have no place to run, no place to hide." I call on every Member to ratify 11 international conventions that would help prevent and punish terrorism and to criminalize the use of explosives in terrorist attacks.

To every nation whose children fall prey to drugs and every nation that makes those drugs: we must do more to reduce demand and to take illegal drugs off the market and off the streets. The United States will do its part. Next week, I will target more than $100-million worth of defence equipment, services and training to Mexico, Colombia and other South American and Caribbean countries.

These resources will help our friends stop the flow of drugs at the source. Now I ask every nation that exports the chemicals needed to make illicit drugs to create an informal group whose members will work to deny these chemicals to drug producers. We must not let more drugs darken the dawn of the next century.

Our duty to fight all these forces of destruction is directly linked to our efforts to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction. We all know we are not immune from this. We saw it when our friends in Japan were subject to the murderous power of a small vial of sarin gas unleashed in the Tokyo subway. We know a small lump of plutonium is enough to build a nuclear bomb. We know that more dangerous people have access to materials of mass destruction because of the rapid movement and open borders of this age. The quest to eliminate these problems from the world's arsenals and to stop them from spreading has taken on a new and powerful urgency for all of us.

So let us strengthen our determination to fight the rogue States, the terrorists and the criminals who menace our safety, our way of life and the potential of our children in the twenty-first century. Let us recommit ourselves to prevent them from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. Let us work harder than ever to lift the nuclear backdrop that has darkened the world's stage for too long now. Let us make these solemn tasks our common obligation, our common commitment; if we do, then together we will enter the twenty-first century marching towards a better, safer world — the very better, safer world the United Nations has sought to build for 51 years.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United States of America for the statement he has just made.

Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, President of the United States of America, was escorted from the rostrum.

Agenda item 9 *(continued)*

General debate

Address by His Excellency Mr. Andris Šķēle, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Andris Šķēle, Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia, His Excellency Mr. Andris Šķēle, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Šķēle (Latvia): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election and to wish you success in carrying out your duties during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I wish all of us a productive and fruitful session of the General Assembly and assure members of the full cooperation of the delegation of Latvia in ensuring the success of their work.

"Reform" was a much-used word during the previous session of this body. The word "crisis" may become just as prevalent during the fifty-first session. In this connection, I should like to recall the words of United States President John Fitzgerald Kennedy:

> "When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity."

Since joining the United Nations five years ago, Latvia has consistently supported reforms so as to avoid crises. Our 50-year absence from the international community makes us especially appreciate the fact that this rostrum is the one place in the world from which all nations can speak with an equal voice about matters of global importance.

A statement from this rostrum is a means rather than an end. It can be but the first of many steps to a level of human development that Immanuel Kant characterized as eternal peace. Too often the closest we come to attaining the ideal of a world without wars and the United Nations as the maintainer of international peace and security is the establishment of the mechanisms needed to halt armed conflict. In this connection, may I recall that the joint Estonian-Latvian-Lithuanian peacekeeping battalion, whose training period will conclude next year, will be a contribution of the Baltic States to the strengthening of the mechanisms for peacekeeping and peacemaking established by the United Nations.

The current world situation forces us to question how often we have been too late, how often we have been found lacking in wisdom, foresight and effective diplomacy in our attempts to resolve disputes peacefully. Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, Rwanda — these are not the only areas that have suffered recently. These are problems for the entire global community, not only the United Nations. It makes us think how far we are from the ideal of eternal world peace, which few believe possible, but whose realization is one of the fundamental purposes of the United Nations. We all agree that peace is a fundamental value and that war means catastrophe and destruction. Still, we live in a world in which armed conflicts constantly arise; where some profit from war; and where relationships of dominance, the rules of the game, and differing values do not exclude war as a mechanism for pursuing national interests.

Reducing the possibility of local conflicts is an important aspect of global security. Any local armed conflict affects the global society as a whole, especially in our rapidly changing and shrinking world, in which the notions of distance, speed and information change rapidly. International terrorism, the illegal trade in weapons and narcotics, people fleeing their homes and other consequences accompany local conflicts, but do not limit themselves to the conflict zone alone. Political instability and racial, religious and ethnic discord, combined with low standards of living, breed armed conflicts. As preventive measures, the United Nations must continue to promote actively a respect for human rights, tolerance, the universality of the United Nations, disarmament and the implementation of arms-control agreements, and support the economies of States that may need assistance.

We hail the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has opened for signature and ratification after a long and difficult search for compromise. I intend to sign the CTBT today. We are convinced that this Treaty can move the world closer to peace. Latvia considers it imperative that work be continued on the control of conventional weapons. We support the chemical weapons Convention, even though we are concerned that the two largest producers of chemical weapons have not yet ratified the Convention.

Latvia believes that universal respect for human rights should continue to be a priority of the United Nations and its Members. Taking into account the ever-increasing tasks of the United Nations human rights system, increased allocation of resources devoted to United Nations human rights activities is an absolute necessity. Double standards on human rights are intolerable, and Latvia devotes particular attention to this. The guidelines for the global protection of human rights are the documents adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights. Countries should implement these guidelines and share with others their experience in doing so.

In Latvia these guidelines have been applied to a unique demographic situation caused by 50 years of occupation. In accordance with a recommendation of the World Conference on Human Rights, Latvia has established an independent institution for the protection of human rights: the State Human Rights Office. This office has a mandate to hear and investigate complaints from Latvia's residents, inform members of society about human rights, and make recommendations to the Government and Parliament on legislation affecting human rights. In establishing the State Human Rights Office, Latvia received invaluable assistance from the United Nations Development Programme, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights.

The United Nations must continue to protect those values that engender a respect for human rights, tolerance, the rejection of violence and the promotion of peace. It is not weapons or physical force that protect homes, people and countries. Rather, true security depends, *inter alia*, on good relations with all neighbours and on a strong economy. Latvia is successfully implementing such a policy. Our aim is to achieve rapid economic growth and to attract foreign investment in Latvia. Already this year, Latvia has one of the lowest rates of inflation in Eastern Europe, along with a stable currency and rapidly rising indexes of development. We have a well developed port system, including the world's second largest potassium-salts-loading harbour and one of Europe's largest harbours for the transit of petroleum products.

Latvia is the geographical centre of the Baltic States and is a natural economic bridge between East and West. Our country belongs to the European family of democratic States, sharing common values and cooperating for their protection. Integration in the European and transatlantic structures is the highest priority for Latvia. We are actively working for the integration of Latvia into the European and global economic systems, as well as for a close partnership in the European continent, on both the governmental and non-governmental levels.

Latvia is also participating in efforts to improve the work of the United Nations so that the Organization can react more effectively to the challenges of our time. In support of the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, and in recognition of the desirability of frequent rotation of Member States represented on important United Nations bodies, Latvia has for the first time ever presented its candidature for a seat on the Economic and Social Council beginning in 1997.

A year has passed since the United Nations celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, when much was heard about the urgency of reform of the Organization. Yet during the last year Member States have been unable to agree on these long-awaited reforms. If Member States continue not to make decisions, the United Nations will slowly but inevitably lose its ability to pursue its global goals effectively. As part of the reform efforts, it is important that the United Nations periodically enunciate and evaluate priorities to be pursued, in particular in times when resources are limited but the demand for them is growing.

One cause of the crisis facing the United Nations is the financial situation. Each Member State's financial contribution to the Organization must reflect its capacity to pay. Contributions can be a great burden for developing countries and countries with economies in transition that are overassessed. A future system of contributions must be fair, transparent and elastic in order that it may readily adapt to economic changes.

Latvia would like to repeat its view that new and innovative financing mechanisms are a necessity. It supports the current effort of the Economic and Social Council to study such mechanisms for the purpose of financing development that is sustainable. The introduction of new financing mechanisms and other financial management tools can only improve the currently weak financial discipline of Member States.

Latvia supports reforms that would result in the reduction of the number of subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly and the number of administrative structures in the Secretariat, as well as a full introduction of methods of modern management.

With regard to the reform of the Security Council, a priority should be to adjust its membership in order to achieve equitable geographic representation and to respond to the increase in the membership of the United Nations in recent decades. The effectiveness of the work of the Security Council must be increased further by making its working methods even more transparent and the exchange of information with non-members more intense than at present.

Latvia is a country that is attached to the ideals of peace, democracy and human rights. It identifies itself with the efforts of the global society to maintain and realize these ideals. It is an active member of the community of nations. This, we are convinced, is the genuine road to security and social and economic prosperity for our country and for the world.

The President: I now call on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, His Excellency Mr. Dick Spring, who will speak on behalf of the European Union.

Mr. Spring (Ireland): Allow me, Sir, to offer you my warm congratulations on your election as President of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am very confident that, with your skill and experience, you will provide the leadership and direction we require to ensure a successful outcome to the work of the forthcoming session. You have the assurance of our full support.

I have the honour to address this Assembly on behalf of the European Union.

Last year we gathered here on the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. The speeches we heard then reflected a dual message: a conviction that the United Nations remained more than ever indispensable in a world of increasing interdependence among nations; and concern that the Organization adapt and renew itself to serve the needs of a new century. There was a clear call that the non-payment of dues owed to the United Nations — this poison in the system — should cease.

The Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the United Nations rightly anticipated

> "a sharp increase in the level of expectations of the United Nations" (*resolution 50/6*).

It called for the occasion to be seized

> "to redirect it to greater service to humankind, especially to those who are suffering and are deeply deprived".

We have no need at the outset of the fifty-first session to seek a new agenda. Cooperation through the United Nations continues to offer the world the irreplaceable means necessary for advancing peace, economic and social progress, human rights, democracy and caring humanitarian action. To retain the Organization's effectiveness, we need, together with adequate resources, a continuing modernization of the structures and working methods of the institutions of the United Nations. What we must do now is sharpen the focus on common priorities to achieve this and get on with the decisions to give them effect.

Globalization is one of the defining characteristics of our age. With it has come the realization that our peace and prosperity cannot be assured by States, or even regions, acting in isolation. The European Union itself embodies the principles of cooperation, interdependence, human rights and democracy. The spirit of cooperation is also the starting point for the contribution that the Union is making at the global level, where the enormous benefits that can be achieved by working together constitute the greatest, and potentially the most rewarding, challenge that faces mankind today.

The very interdependence of our peoples, nations and regions that leads us to assemble here as the United Nations should serve to underscore the unique role and potential of this Organization, the sole such universal body of global outreach. Has it done so? Have we strengthened the potential of the United Nations, or yet sufficiently exerted the energy and imagination necessary to use the opportunities it offers us?

We were able last year to reflect with justifiable pride on 50 years of substantial success by the United Nations. Our celebration was tempered, however, by a sobering awareness that the level of conflict, economic disparities and humanitarian crisis in our world was increasing, not diminishing. We had witnessed a series of open and bloody intra-State conflicts and the resurgence of old antagonisms in many regions of the world, resulting in death and injury to millions of innocent civilians, many of them women and children; an increase in the already high number of refugees; gross and flagrant violations of human rights on a massive scale; and the widespread incidence of hunger, disease and homelessness. At the same time, threats to the

environment and the scourges of drugs and terrorism were among a new range of risks and challenges that required concerted international action.

The urgency and complexity of these and other problems facing the United Nations at a time of great political, economic and technological change led us to a common call for a United Nations revitalized and more effective in dealing with these new needs. Some progress has been made in the past year in rationalizing United Nations activities in the economic and social fields and in enhancing efficiency and better management. This deserves to be recognized. But we are still far from the overall results needed. Serious new efforts are required from Member States and the Organization. The multilateral approach which the United Nations embodies is under threat if we cannot respond to the challenges before us. We need a renewed commitment to collective action, with strong vision and leadership sustained by the political will of each Member State. The European Union renews again today its commitment to the United Nations. We are determined to equip it for the tasks of a new century.

Recent experience has taught us that we need a more encompassing strategy for conflict prevention and crisis management. This strategy has to address both the causes and the consequences of conflict. The Agenda for Peace was a well-considered and timely initiative of the Secretary-General which points the way forward. Substantial lessons from the United Nations experience of peacekeeping have indeed been learned. They should be applied in developing this new strategy.

To secure peace, the root causes of conflict have to be tackled. Too often the United Nations is called upon to react to the appalling aftermath of conflict. Prevention is a far better strategy. Improved early warning through more effective and internationally coordinated efforts which also take account of economic and social factors can do much to improve the quality of the response. There needs to be an increased emphasis on preventive diplomacy and on a more informed, better-planned and rapid response to crises, including improved procedures for consultation with troop-contributing countries. Existing mechanisms for mediation, conciliation and good offices could be more vigorously and imaginatively exploited. Post-conflict rehabilitation has to be more comprehensive and coordinated to address the wider issues of humanitarian assistance, economic and social reconstruction and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Even with an improved approach to early warning and conflict prevention, peacekeeping operations will still be necessary. The experience of some recent difficult operations should not detract from the record of successes in United Nations peacekeeping. The support of the European Union for the peacekeeping role of the United Nations is undiminished. The member States of the Union, my own included, have consistently provided resources and personnel to United Nations peacekeeping. The Union today provides the majority of personnel for current operations and contributes some 37 per cent of the United Nations peacekeeping budget. This has involved sacrifices, including at times the ultimate sacrifice. On behalf of the European Union, I pay tribute to the memory of United Nations peacekeepers who have laid down their lives in the cause of peace and to the over 25,000 peacekeepers currently serving in 17 United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Too often, the United Nations has been called upon to intervene in conflict situations without a clear mandate, adequate resources or the consistent political support required to have any prospect of success. Too often, the United Nations has been confined to policing indefinitely a fragile and hostile peace between parties that, even after decades, show no real inclination to assume responsibility for securing a resolution of the conflict. This wastes much-needed United Nations resources. But more seriously, it undermines confidence in the United Nations. If we apply our energies to developing new strategies for conflict prevention and crisis management, we will have done much to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in this core area. The European Union, for its part, will work to strengthen and reinforce this vital role of the Organization.

The United Nations cannot be expected to stand alone in conflict prevention and the maintenance of world peace. The European Union welcomes the trend towards closer cooperation and mutual support between the United Nations and regional organizations. In Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has been designated as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter. The United Nations and the OSCE are already cooperating closely and coordinating their efforts. Within the OSCE area, the European Union is working with all the OSCE participating States to develop further the concept of mutually reinforcing institutions so as to enhance European security and stability. The Union encourages and supports the similar efforts being made in other regions. It is important that the United Nations benefit

from, and build on, these initiatives. The meetings of regional organizations that the Secretary-General has convened in recent years are an important innovation in this regard. Since its inception, the United Nations has played a central role in the longer-term strategies for conflict prevention, in particular in the fields of disarmament and arms control, human rights and equitable economic and social development.

The European Union attaches the highest priority to progress in the fields of arms control and disarmament. If we mean to invest in peace, then we must all become advocates of disarmament. Today was a particularly good day for disarmament and for the United Nations. It was my privilege this morning to join with other colleagues in the European Union in signing, on behalf of our respective States, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The European Union would urge all States to sign and ratify this important Treaty.

We must respond to the clear wish of all our peoples to live in a world in which the threats posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction can be reduced and ultimately removed. We have made a start with Conventions banning chemical and biological weapons. The next step is the start of negotiations for a cut-off treaty.

The European Union will also give priority at this session to measures to deal with the menace of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel landmines. Today, there are over 110 million landmines in our earth, mostly in developing countries. They kill, indiscriminately, 26,000 people every year, mostly civilians, many of them women and children. Anti-personnel landmines have disabled a quarter of a million people.

It is an incredible and obscene irony that at a time when the United Nations, with the active support of the European Union and other States, is continuing its vital work of mine clearance, further millions of anti-personnel landmines are still deployed annually. The European Union has endorsed the appeal made by the Security Council to all States to contribute to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Assistance in Mine Clearance. We call upon all Member States of the United Nations to join with the European Union, in a spirit of common humanity, to put an end to indiscriminate killing and maiming by anti-personnel landmines.

Conventional arms control, at both a global and regional level, also requires our attention. We now have the opportunity to overcome the mistrust and insecurity that previously predominated in arms-control negotiations and to create a climate of transparency and cooperation leading to arms reduction. This process is under way in Europe. We would hope to see it develop in other regions of the world.

Failure to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms is a major cause of conflict today. Many intra-State conflicts arise from the denial of basic human rights to minorities and in some cases to whole populations. The democratic right of all citizens to participate freely and openly in the governance of their societies continues to be under threat or denied. The battle for the economic and social emancipation and empowerment of women has begun. This is an issue of special importance for the European Union.

The United Nations has since its inception been in the vanguard in the promotion and defence of human rights and democratic freedoms. Its record is indeed a proud one. The European Union will continue its support, both material and political, for the vital ongoing work of the United Nations in this area. The Union believes it is essential to secure adequate financing from the regular budget for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. The European Union fully supports the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted by the recent World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. This is a timely initiative in tackling this appalling abuse, which affects all regions in the world.

Despite decades of effort and resources, the poverty gap has widened, not narrowed. For many of the least-developed nations, their development is regressing rather than advancing. The time is long overdue to mount a new global offensive against poverty, a major cause of instability and conflict. We will give major priority to the war against poverty and the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s initiative.

A more vigorous effort is needed to carry through major programmes for the economic and social advancement of women, as are more emphasis and action on the gender perspective across the whole spectrum of development.

The European Union recognizes the central role which the United Nations system, through its specialized agencies and programmes, has played and will continue to play in the humanitarian, economic and social fields. We need to reform and revitalize the United Nations

system in this area to ensure a real and lasting impact on sustainable development.

Our aim is reform, not the retrenchment of resources. The discussions on "An Agenda for Development" have begun this process. A sense of urgency is required to give impetus to our work during this session of the General Assembly and to build upon recent progress. The European Union will pay particular attention to the follow-up to resolution 50/227 concerning the revitalization of the system.

Effective follow-up to the conclusions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) substantive session on humanitarian assistance will be vital to achieve a stronger and more coordinated strategy within the United Nations system to deliver effective programmes where they are most needed. We must also see progress in coordinating the outcome of recent United Nations conferences, including the Habitat II Conference in June.

The European Union welcomes the renewed emphasis of ECOSOC on the global threat posed by narcotic drugs. The Union is giving high priority to measures which will improve the coordination of efforts to fight this threat, which undermines the very fabric of all our societies.

The success of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) conference in Midrand is welcome in that it underlines that reform and progress in renewing the system are possible.

The forthcoming special session on Agenda 21 and the follow-up to the Rio Conference will allow us to give fresh impetus to action on development and environmental issues and renewed support to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The European Union invites all Member States to join in a new global partnership for development. It is in the common interest of the peoples we represent to forge a global alliance against poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance and deprivation. This is a key challenge for the United Nations and its Member States.

Our endeavour to revitalize and reform the United Nations system is taking place against the backdrop of a serious financial crisis. This continuing crisis undermines the necessary climate of partnership and the capacity to implement current programmes in many areas. It distracts efforts and attention from the real tasks of the moment.

The European Union has repeatedly stated that all Member States have an obligation under the Charter to discharge their arrears and pay their assessed contributions to the regular and peacekeeping budgets promptly, in full and without conditions. The States members of the European Union, which contribute over 35 per cent of the regular and over 37 per cent of the peacekeeping budgets have consistently honoured this obligation. They believe that to resolve this crisis, all States Members of the United Nations must do likewise.

The Union recognizes the need for financial reform to secure the long-term financial stability of the United Nations. It has therefore put forward a set of proposals aimed at achieving comprehensive financial reform, including adaptation of the scale of assessments to make it more genuinely reflective of the capacity to pay.

This session should see resolute efforts to negotiate solutions.

The conflicts and tensions in today's world are reflected in the memorandum distributed as part of this speech, in which the European Union outlines its position on issues facing the world community. I would like to draw attention at this point to some critical areas of major concern to the European Union: the former Yugoslavia, Cyprus, the Middle East peace process and the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Europe has not been spared the tragic ethnic conflict witnessed in other regions. The progress we have made in bringing an end to the savage war in the former Yugoslavia has required the combined efforts of the international community and a variety of international and regional bodies, including the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union.

However, we still need to address the massive humanitarian and reconstruction needs left in its wake, as well as the more difficult and long-term task of rebuilding trust, security and peace among the peoples of the region and ensuring full respect for the territorial integrity of the various sovereign States.

The European Union and its member States remain committed to full implementation of the provisions of the peace Agreement for Bosnia and Herzegovina and to making a very substantial contribution to the concerted effort being made to assist the parties who have primary responsibility for this implementation in living up to their obligations.

There are daunting tasks ahead. The immediate focus is on the follow-up to the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina which took place on 14 September 1996 under the supervision of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. On this occasion, I would acknowledge in particular the very important contribution that was made by the Implementation Force and the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the International Police Task Force, in ensuring that the elections were conducted peacefully.

The Union fully supports the strategy of the High Representative, Mr. Carl Bildt, in regard to establishing the common institutions of the State after the elections. He has the full assurance of our support for his leading role in the implementation process. We do not underestimate the enormity of this task. If we are to succeed in maintaining peace, it is essential that the international community closely coordinate its activities and that all parties cooperate fully in the process. The European Union will work closely with the United Nations and the international community to achieve an effective long-term strategy to secure peace and self-sustaining stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this context, the Union notes that parties have agreed to hold further elections in September 1998. An important focus during the intervening period will be assisting the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in facilitating the return of the many thousands of refugees and displaced persons who have not yet been able to go back to their homes. Ultimately, our aim must be a return by all the former Yugoslav republics to the community of peaceful and democratic nations.

The basic agreement for Eastern Slavonia must be implemented in full and the return of refugees and displaced persons to this region completed. Such persons must be ensured of full protection for their human rights. The Union acknowledges the important work of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium, which enjoys our full support in its efforts.

The Union continues to attach great importance to full cooperation with the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. This work reflects the resolve of the international community to bring to justice those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is vital to efforts to develop justice, confidence and democracy in the region that all parties fulfil the commitments they have made to hand over indicted persons.

The European Union stresses once again that the current status quo in Cyprus is not acceptable. It reaffirms its strong support for the efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations aimed at a negotiated and lasting solution to the Cyprus question which will respect the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and unity of the country in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The European Union welcomes the appointment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Han Sung-Joo. The Presidency of the European Union has also nominated a Special Representative on Cyprus.

The Middle East peace process, based on the principles already accepted by all parties under the Madrid and Oslo frameworks, is the only path to security and peace for Israel, the Palestinians and the neighbouring States. The Florence European Council of June 1996 reaffirmed the approach of the European Union. It further stated that peace in the Middle East was a fundamental interest of the European Union. The Union is therefore concentrating its efforts on encouraging all parties to re-engage themselves in this process and to respect and implement fully all the agreements already reached.

We wish to make an active contribution to promote this process in both the political and economic fields and to build upon the important work which has been done over the years by the United Nations in the interests of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

We would invite all Member States to do their utmost to nurture this process and give encouragement to all parties to move forward.

The Union is deeply concerned that the current lack of progress in negotiations should not undermine the prospects for peace. The progress already achieved should be advanced by further agreement on concrete issues. We hope that the recent meeting between the Israeli Prime Minister and the Palestinian President will have positive results for the peace process. We call upon the Israeli Government not to pursue the extension of settlements. Continued expansion of settlements does more than any other issue to erode Palestinian confidence in the peace process. It undermines the ability of both the Palestinian Authority and society at large to deter extremists and trouble-makers. As the largest donor, the Union remains committed to providing assistance to the Palestinian people and urges all parties concerned to contribute to the economic revival of the West Bank and

Gaza. This endeavour will hopefully be rendered more effective by the recent relaxation of the border closures, and we hope that this encouraging trend will continue.

It is important that all tracks of the peace process move forward. We favour an early resumption of negotiations between Syria and Israel, and have reaffirmed our support for the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon and for early negotiations involving that country.

The creation of the Middle East peace process has been a historic breakthrough in the long-standing search to bring to the peoples of the region the lasting and just peace which they clearly want and, indeed, they deserve. The European Union will intensify its efforts to ensure its success.

The European Union shares the heightened concern of the international community at the grave threat to peace and stability in the Great Lakes region posed by the current situation in Burundi. The United Nations and the European Union are already involved in an international effort to cope with the aftermath of the Rwanda tragedy — the major humanitarian crisis, the serious refugee problem, and the ongoing process of regional reconstruction. But at the same time the area is again facing the prospect of bloody civil war and genocide, in Burundi. We cannot allow this to happen. The European Union strongly supports the efforts of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity to restore dialogue and democracy in Burundi. It acknowledges in particular the pivotal role being played in this endeavour by former President Nyerere, supported by other regional leaders. Their efforts are assisted by the special envoys of the European Union and the United Nations, and other parties.

The international community, through Security Council resolution 1072 (1996), has sent a clear message to the parties involved that there must be an end to all violence and an early beginning of unconditional and all-inclusive national dialogue in Burundi. This is the only constructive path to a solution which is lasting and based on a negotiated, democratic and institutional consensus which ensures security for all. The European Union remains willing to support the necessary recovery process in Burundi once the path of dialogue is embarked upon by all parties with the resolve necessary to ensure a solution. It therefore calls on all parties to forsake violence and to engage in this process of dialogue.

The European Union continues to be the major donor to the humanitarian and reconstruction needs of the region. It welcomes the progress in rehabilitation in Rwanda, to which it contributes substantially, and it pays tribute to the work of the United Nations in various sectors in Rwanda.

The return of refugees and national reconciliation in Rwanda will remain a priority for the Union. We will also continue to support the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994, to underscore our belief that the international community must pursue and bring to justice those who have perpetrated gross crimes against humanity.

We have begun this fifty-first session with a signal of hope. The signature at the United Nations today of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty shows this Organization in its rightful place — seized of the deepest concerns of humanity. This is the place which the founders sought for the United Nations. This is the place which it is our responsibility to ensure that it firmly holds for today's world and for the generations to come.

Lastly, and speaking solely in my capacity as Foreign Minister of Ireland, I would like to inform the Assembly of developments in the Northern Ireland situation over the past year. The search for a lasting peace and a comprehensive political settlement continues. Substantial advances have been recorded in the past 12 months, despite serious setbacks and despite the uncertainty and suspicion which still hamper the development of true reconciliation between the communities in Northern Ireland and between the main traditions which share the island of Ireland.

Negotiations involving the Governments and the parties began in June and resumed earlier this month. The stated purpose of these negotiations is to achieve a new beginning for relationships within Northern Ireland, within the island of Ireland and between the peoples of these islands, and to agree new institutions and structures to take account of the totality of relationships.

The Irish Government continues to base its approach to the negotiations on the fundamental principles set out in the 1993 Joint Declaration published with the British

Government. As I indicated last year, A New Framework for Agreement, published in 1995, represents the shared assessment of the two Governments of a balanced and honourable accommodation which might be envisaged across all the key relationships. We shall in negotiations make the case for a fair accommodation along these lines, believing as we do in the necessity of radical and ambitious change on all sides. At the same time, agreement requires the support of the political representatives in both communities, and must also command majority popular support in both parts of Ireland.

We continue to be firmly of the view that wholly inclusive negotiations, involving the representatives of both communities in their totality, offer the best prospect of achieving a durable settlement founded on a recognition of the rights and aspirations of all. The Irish Republican Army (IRA), by terminating its cease-fire last February, not only perpetrated renewed death and destruction and flouted the wishes of the overwhelming majority of the people in both Britain and Ireland. It also obliged the two Governments to cease ministerial dialogue with Sinn Fein, which, because of the collapse of the cease-fire, is currently not a participant in the negotiations.

This is a matter of both regret and frustration. Sinn Fein has a potentially valuable and constructive role to play in contributing to a stable and far-reaching settlement. But political dialogue is sustainable and productive only on the basis of the principles of democracy and non-violence. That is why there must be an unequivocal restoration of the IRA cease-fire before Sinn Fein can enter the negotiations, which would be enhanced by their presence, as they are by the continuing presence of the loyalist parties.

Likewise, however, all of those truly committed to finding an accommodation must impartially reject sectarianism and oppose disorder from whatever source if they wish to create an atmosphere in which reconciliation can flourish and agreement take root. The confrontation and polarization which occurred during the past summer in the "marching season", the consequences of which still vibrate, highlight the absolute necessity of compromise and mutual understanding.

The instrument for progress is to hand in the Talks process under way, if we can persuade all the parties to use the Talks process constructively. That requires the earliest possible transition to substantive negotiations. The Irish Government is working with the British Government to persuade the representatives of the unionist community to embark on this step without delay, secure in the knowledge that the process already contains multiple safeguards, including the guarantee of popular referendum, to ensure that the interests of their community must be respected in any agreed outcome.

The continuing support of the international community is an invaluable asset on which we can draw in the search for a settlement. Most directly, the negotiations benefit from the independent chairmanship of Senator Mitchell of the United States, former Prime Minister Holkeri of Finland, and General de Chastelain of Canada, whose skill and authority command the respect and confidence of all participants. In addition, I would like to express my Government's gratitude for the generosity and support of all of our many friends in this Assembly, in particular the Governments of the United States and of our European Union partners.

The wounds of conflict are still deep and unhealed in Ireland. We can be under no illusion but that the process of reconciliation and the crafting of an agreement will be slow and painstaking. But we have continued to make progress on that journey, and we are committed to continuing in our quest for peace.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Yevgeny Primakov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Primakov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The agenda of the General Assembly at the current session reflects all the complexity of the stage mankind is now going through, the essence of which is the transition from bloc confrontation to multipolarity, economic interdependence and the democratization of international relations.

I would like to emphasize that during the past year Russia made its contribution to the consolidation of this very trend. At the domestic level, this means an uncompromising continuation of the process of reforming society. The results of the recent presidential elections in our country have convincingly proved that Russia has decisively embarked on the road to the future. The majority of Russians voted for the continuation of economic reform, for a State of law and for a policy of openness and cooperation.

In our relations with the other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, we resolutely oppose both the idea of restoring the Soviet Union, an idea based on the denial of the sovereignty of the Commonwealth

States, and narrow-minded national isolationism. We stand for the voluntary integration and unification of the members of the Commonwealth and hold that it should not be isolated from the rest of the world. We wish to ensure, and we shall ensure, that the CIS will become an important centre of world economic development and international stability.

On a wider international plane, Russia is pursuing a policy aimed at establishing a new world order firmly based on the equality of all States, justice and universal security. However, the establishment of such a world order is a slow process, influenced by both objective and subjective factors. It is only natural that the end of the cold war provided a starting point for the transition to achieving a stable and predictable peace at the global level.

But zones of regional conflict have expanded drastically. The upsurge of terrorism has caused universal shock, and the threat of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is emerging. The rejection of ideological, military-force confrontation, brought about by the end of the cold war, clearly proved insufficient to neutralize all these dangers and risks.

Let us confess, at least to ourselves, that we will not succeed here unless, first and foremost, we overcome the inertia of the political mentality. Unfortunately, the stereotypes that took root in the minds of several generations of statesmen during the 40 years of the cold war have not yet disappeared along with the dismantling of strategic missiles and the destruction of thousands of tanks. In this connection, I would like to single out three conditions for the transformation of international relations during the post-cold-war period.

First, we should see to it that the old fronts of bloc confrontation are not replaced with new lines of division. That is precisely why we accept neither the idea of the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military infrastructure to the area of the now defunct Warsaw Treaty nor the efforts to make that alliance the axis of a new European system. The enormous possibilities for economic cooperation and the spiritual enrichment of all the peoples of the continent can be realized only through the creation of a genuinely all-European system of international relations. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Lisbon summit must be an important stage in the construction of such a Europe.

It is important to stress in general that the logic of a multipolar world in the twenty-first century should differ qualitatively from the schemes outlined by Metternich and Bismarck. The way towards the establishment of a system of comprehensive security is through learning the skills of equal partnership between the various "poles", rather than through the revival of reflexes of rivalry and of balance of power.

The threat of new lines of division is appearing not only in Europe, but elsewhere. The understandable intolerance of the extremism of certain Islamic groups and factions must not develop into a categorization of the Muslim world at large as an enemy of modern civilization. This is probably one of the pressing requirements of our day.

Russia advocates resolute opposition to extremist and terrorist forces. They are especially dangerous when they enjoy State support, and no effort should be spared to prevent any State from rendering such support. This cannot be justified. I believe it is time a universal convention, covering all States without exception, were elaborated within the United Nations, denying political asylum anywhere to persons engaged in terrorist activities. However, no sanctions should be used as a means to punish peoples or as an instrument to overthrow Governments. It is far more effective to offer prospects for a better future to those who renounce extremism and accept the norms of conduct by the world community.

The second condition for achieving a durable peace is the emancipation from a mentality based on concepts of leaders and followers. Such a mentality is fuelled by illusions that some countries emerged from the cold war as victors, and others as the vanquished. But this is not the case. Peoples on both sides of the Iron Curtain jointly strove to rid themselves of the policy of confrontation. Meanwhile, the mentality based on leaders and followers paves the way directly towards the establishment of a unipolar world. Such a world-order model is unacceptable today to the overwhelming majority of the international community.

Finally, the third condition for the successful movement towards stable peace lies in the coordinated activities of the international community. Today, one of the most important tasks is the settlement of regional and local conflicts. In this regard, significant progress has been achieved recently. Peace agreements are being implemented in Bosnia. Initial important agreements have been achieved for a durable peace in the Middle East.

We have managed to secure ceasefires in Transdniester, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorny Karabakh. The situation has improved somewhat in the conflict zones on the African continent and in Latin America. But as yet no breakthrough to a durable peace has been achieved in any of these hotbeds of tension.

The future of the Middle East is a cause for grave concern. Russia — one of the sponsors of the peace process — cannot accept the sacrifice to tactical considerations and internal political manoeuvres of the first fruits of the peace negotiations, which were won at such a great cost. The implementation of the Agreements reached is the only realistic basis for maintaining the peace process. The only possible way forward is to advance through negotiation on the basis of the principle of "land for peace", Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as resolution 425 (1978), which deals with Lebanon. It should be clear that the danger of reverting to confrontation becomes greater as the artificial pause in the peace process continues. When negotiators are silent, lethal weapons begin to awake.

We appreciate the peacemaking efforts of the United States of America, the European Union, France, Egypt and other members of the international community and we support an even closer partnership in peacemaking. That is the most effective way to promote peace-building in the Middle East.

The Bosnian settlement has entered a new and crucial stage since the elections of 14 September. The prospects for a lasting peace have become greater, but the risk of slipping into a new spiral of hostility and confrontation remains. I call upon all the Bosnian parties to take full advantage of the chance for peace created by the international community. At the same time, the United Nations, the OSCE, members of the Contact Group and the High Representative should immediately take a just and balanced approach to resolving outstanding problems. Assistance for the social and economic reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina should be intensified considerably and conditions created for the return of refugees.

The time has also come to look beyond the horizon of the Paris agreements. There would seem to be a need for a large-scale and prolonged civilian peacemaking operation in which the United Nations and its specialized agencies will play an important role. The international military and police presence, to which Russia contributes, should remain a factor in the peace process for a given period after December 1996.

The lifting of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) and the Bosnian Serbs is an indispensable condition for a successful peace in the former Yugoslavia. I hope that, in the near future, a Yugoslav delegation will take its place in this Hall, as it has at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The programme of disarmament, security and stability for the twenty-first century should become one of the major axes of transition period strategy. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is one huge step in this direction. Russia has just signed the Treaty and we believe that it is of fundamental importance for all countries with nuclear capability to accede to it. However, it should clearly be understood that testing by any country of a nuclear explosive device before the Treaty enters into force will radically change the international situation and greatly prejudice the Treaty itself, and may compel many countries to revise their attitude to it.

I should like to draw the attention of the Treaty's opponents to the fact that it will not only contribute to the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation, but will objectively stimulate a gradual transition to nuclear disarmament on a multilateral basis. That is the purpose of President Yeltsin's proposal to conclude a treaty on nuclear security and stability with the participation of all the nuclear Powers. We invite interested States to begin exchanging views on the issue. Our suggestion that nuclear arsenals be located only on the territories of the nuclear Powers in question remains current.

The strengthening of the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction depends directly upon reliable prevention of the illicit traffic in fissile materials. The Moscow Summit of the Eight on Nuclear Safety and Security, convened as a result of a Russian initiative, contributed significantly to a solution of this problem. I call on all United Nations Member States to become involved in the implementation of the Moscow agreements.

The rights of an individual should occupy a central place in any new concept of international security. Strengthening the international human-rights protection mechanism could ensure the observance of these rights. Its oversight and preventive functions should be consolidated and made more practical. However, legitimate efforts to ensure respect for human rights

cannot serve political purposes. It is too delicate an area to be invaded by political speculation and objectives.

My comments apply fully to the protection of the rights of national minorities. The relevance of this problem is evident in today's world. The complexity of the situation — let us be frank — requires a link between the protection of the rights of national minorities and observance of the principle of the territorial integrity of States. Russia is directing its policy at precisely such a link. My comments also apply to the Baltic States. While recognizing the sovereignty of those countries and their territorial integrity, Russia cannot remain indifferent to the discriminatory practices pursued against the Russian-speaking populations in Estonia and Latvia. While acknowledging measures that have already been taken to improve the situation, we believe that the United Nations and other international organizations should intensify and systematize their work for the protection of the rights of national minorities.

How do we implement this strategy for creating a new world order? Despite the importance of bilateral relations and successful regional organizations, the United Nations remains the principal mechanism capable of ensuring the transition from a bipolar and confrontational world to a multipolar and democratic one. In such circumstances, the significance of the United Nations as a centre for coordinating the actions of States is increasing. During the formation of a multipolar system, the United Nations is called upon to serve as a kind of safety net, minimizing the destructive effects of the changes and directing them towards democratic evolution.

The major task of the United Nations remains the maintenance of international peace and security. Furthermore, the principal tools available to the Organization must be political and diplomatic. I remind the Assembly of this fact because, during the past few years within the United Nations, a "sanctions syndrome" has begun to emerge: a desire to apply sanctions and other coercive measures more broadly and actively, sometimes ignoring existing political and diplomatic avenues. We are convinced that the United Nations should take such measures only in exceptional cases, after all other means have been genuinely exhausted.

On the whole, there is a need to modernize the United Nations sanctions mechanisms. Today, for example, no specific procedure is provided for lifting sanctions, and, as experience has demonstrated, this is extremely important. The humanitarian damage caused by sanctions and the damage to third countries should be minimized.

It is extremely important to emphasize that the United Nations must be maintained as the sole Organization that can authorize the use of force. Any actions of that nature taken in circumvention of the Security Council must be totally precluded.

The United Nations can and must work purposefully towards establishing a new global legal framework. To give impetus to such work Russia has proposed the holding in 1999 of a third peace conference. This idea already has the support of a significant number of States. I believe that the time has come to discuss this initiative in a constructive and substantive manner.

Past experience shows the need for new approaches by the United Nations to peacekeeping operations. We can already discern a pyramid regulating the relations of the United Nations with regional organizations. Without the development of such relations the United Nations may not be able to withstand the burden of peacemaking actions. I refer specifically to a pyramid, because it is of fundamental importance to do no harm to the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace.

We are counting on significantly more attention being paid by the United Nations to conflicts in the area of the Commonwealth of Independent States. So far, the major role in this respect has been played by Russia and its Commonwealth partners.

In view of present circumstances, Russia calls on the United Nations to address the Afghan conflict. In that multinational and long-suffering country, a truly critical situation has arisen, and we have to do everything possible to prevent the country from disintegrating. The Afghan tragedy, like the endless series of internal conflicts in Rwanda and Liberia, is the most convincing argument for the development of a United Nations policy of national reconciliation diplomacy.

To cope with all these tasks, the United Nations itself must be updated and adapted to these new conditions. Reform is long overdue, and it is not a single measure that is required but a process that encompasses the entire United Nations system. Reform of the United Nations requires clearly defined goals: first, that it carry out its activities in a timely manner; and secondly, that

its structure be optimized in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization.

A great deal has already been done to implement reform. The Secretary-General has made a considerable contribution to these efforts, and Russia supports the continuation of this difficult and protracted effort.

It is a well-established tradition to conclude statements before this Assembly by saying that the current session must play a special role in strengthening peace and that peoples are expecting us to make decisions. I am confident that this session of the General Assembly will live up to the expectations of Governments and the hopes of peoples: that all of us will take a new step in humankind's difficult transition towards a world united in its diversity, a world that is open to universal economic and spiritual development, a world that promises security and stability — a world in which States cooperate on an equal footing. Let us work together for the sake of this goal.

The Acting President: I now call on the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, His Excellency the Right Honourable Malcolm Rifkind.

Mr. Rifkind (United Kingdom): May I begin by congratulating Ambassador Razali of Malaysia on his assumption of office as our General Assembly's new President and offer our thanks to his predecessor, Ambassador Freitas do Amaral, for all his valuable work during the fiftieth session.

The late twentieth century is an exciting time. For the fortunate among us, the world has never offered more: travel with unheard-of ease, a tantalizing cornucopia of consumer goods, 100 or more television stations in our homes, the Internet. But these fruits are denied the vast majority of the planet's population. The number of people who live in absolute poverty is still growing. Their misery is a challenge to all our consciences, and I want today to talk about what we all, the developed countries as well as the developing, can do for those trapped in poverty — what we can do together to open the door to development.

But first of all I would like to say a few brief words about four other issues of particular importance at this moment in time.

First of all, Hong Kong. The year 1997 will be a special one for Hong Kong. Less than 300 days from now the world will witness history. The peaceful transfer of sovereignty over a territory of 6 million free and prosperous people is an event unparalleled in modern times. A transfer on the basis of an international Treaty, registered here at the United Nations — a Treaty between two members of the Security Council, which guarantees that for 50 years after 1997 there will be "one country, two systems" and that "Hong Kong people will rule Hong Kong". Let there be no doubt of Britain's continuing commitment to the future of Hong Kong and its people, well into the next century.

Thanks to the efforts of the Hong Kong people themselves, the development of Hong Kong is one of the world's great success stories. The Chinese Government has made clear its determination to preserve Hong Kong's prosperity, its stability and its way of life as a free and open society based on the rule of law. For Britain, a successful transfer will be the closing of a chapter, but also a new beginning to our relations with both Hong Kong and with China.

I suggest that all Members of the United Nations have a stake in this historic exercise. As long as the promises of the joint Declaration are turned into reality, Hong Kong has a bright future, as part of China and as one of the world's leading cities, contributing enormously to growth and prosperity throughout the Asia-Pacific region. And I am sure that all here will join me in welcoming that prospect.

I want also to take this opportunity to commend the International Court of Justice in its fiftieth anniversary year. The International Court has performed groundbreaking work in settling disputes between States, and I am proud that the United Kingdom has always been among the States that accept its compulsory jurisdiction. I hope that others will join us in pledging both moral and material support to the International Court. The more who accept that international law must be the foundation of international relations, the safer we shall all be.

The world is safer today too with the historic signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Earlier this morning I had the privilege of signing the Treaty for the United Kingdom. It shows that we can, by acting with determination and by making sacrifices, reap the benefits of the end of the cold war, and I firmly believe that the Treaty can make an important contribution to preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons and in promoting international security. The Treaty was the product of a multilateral negotiation and was adopted here in the General Assembly. But that

alone is not enough. If it is to be fully effective, it must command universal support, and the United Kingdom will now put in hand the steps to allow us to ratify the Treaty. It is the sovereign right of every State to decide whether or not to be bound by international agreements. But it is our firm conviction that this Treaty is in the interests of all, and I urge all States to give it their full support.

Meanwhile, other threats still loom large. The insidious spectre of terrorism is a concern to all of us here, and it is right that the United Nations should be the forum for debate on this worldwide menace. The United Kingdom is proposing for adoption at this session a United Nations declaration which will spell out unequivocally that acts of terrorism, and the financing, planning and incitement of these acts, are contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. People who do these evil things and who seek asylum under the United Nations refugee Convention do not deserve to benefit from it.

The United Nations faces a critical year. It remains the hope of people across the world in search of peace and development. But the changes required to adapt and strengthen the United Nations to meet the challenges of the future have not yet been completed. This year must see a solution to the financial crisis. Reform must be part of the solution, including a thorough updating of the system of assessing contributions to the United Nations, so that contributions match real ability to pay. But all Members must pay what they owe, both their assessments and their arrears, and promptly; and the European Union's proposals are a good basis for negotiation. It will also be important to achieve over the coming year a resolution to the long-standing discussions of Security Council enlargement. In short, the United Nations must be made fit for the new millennium.

I turn now to my main theme. Three months ago, at Lyons, the Group of Seven countries committed themselves to a partnership for the economic development of the world. This is not just a catchy slogan; it is a fresh approach to the challenge of development, and what it means is that the developing countries and the developed together would share responsibility for creating the conditions that will allow economies to grow, a shared agenda of measures that we need to take to promote development.

For the countries of the developing world, this means pursuing policies to enable economies to grow: taxes need to be kept low, subsidies cannot be allowed to distort markets, exports should not be impeded by heavy tariffs. Domestic markets must be allowed to operate with as little interference as possible. The goal must be to establish an environment where the private sector can flourish, for the private sector is the engine of growth.

In 1755, Adam Smith famously remarked that for prosperity

> "Little else is requisite ... but peace, easy taxes, and tolerable administration of justice".

This is still a valid recipe today — not easy to achieve, but with the sound foundations of good government and sensible macroeconomic policies, enterprise can flourish anywhere. This is the challenge to the Governments of the developing world.

What of the developed world's side of the bargain? — countries such as my own. Our responsibility is to remove the shackles which hinder developing economies as they try to enter the global market. Many of the poorest countries are still caught in a mire of debt they are unlikely ever to be able to pay off. This benefits no one. The United Kingdom has long argued that, when combined with macroeconomic reform of the kind I have described, deep debt relief can kick-start the development of the poorest economies. Some time ago, Britain helped to identify steps that could be taken to lift the debt burden from the poorest, most indebted countries: more debt relief from bilateral creditors and getting the multilateral agencies themselves to share more of the burden. Since then the Paris Club of creditors has made an important contribution by increasing debt forgiveness as agreed following British proposals at the Naples Summit in 1994. The multilateral agencies too have come up with some useful proposals, such as the World Bank's Trust Fund to provide debt relief. I also welcome the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) commitment to continue providing concessional finance through the enhanced structural adjustment facility.

These measures to relieve debt need to be implemented both flexibly and soon. The countries in greatest need should be granted maximum relief as swiftly as possible. I look forward to final agreement at the annual meetings of the IMF and the World Bank next week.

The private sector is the motor of development. Private investment flows to the developing world are now at record levels. The United Kingdom is the third largest source of private investment. But these flows are still not

reaching the poorest countries. There is therefore a continuing need for concessional aid to prime the pump of homegrown development. We need to focus our efforts on those countries where help is needed most and which can make the best use of it. Help must primarily be targeted at creating growth with equity, at developing human resources to their full potential, at giving priority to the needs of the poor: to health and education, to clean water and small enterprises.

Increasingly this partnership in development amongst us all has to deal with the growing problems of planet survival: climate change, the environment, the future of the world's oceans and forests, and pandemic diseases. Development which ignores these will not be sustainable. The United Nations is a central forum for focusing the attention and action of Governments and civil society on these challenges as we enter the next century. Next year's General Assembly special session to review the Rio summit on environment and development is one example.

But the best help that we in the developed world can give to the developing is to buy what they produce, and to do that we in the developed world must demolish the barriers that we still maintain against imports from the poorer countries of the developing world. When I look around the world, I see many developing countries bursting with exports that they have to sell: textiles, food, manufactured goods. But tragically, the markets of the richer countries of the developed world are often closed to these exports. Last week's report from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) predicted that poor countries could triple their exports to the North over the next 10 years if import quotas were phased out – an extra $175 billion a year in income. Protectionism is starving the developing economies of their oxygen, the oxygen of growth.

The European Union's record is better than most. We already have a wide-ranging scheme to allow duty-free imports from developing countries. But even so, the European Union obstructs, for example, imports of Palestinian cut flowers; it obstructs fruit juices from South Africa, strawberry jam from Bulgaria. Other developed countries are even less generous. The United States targets imports of Mexican tomatoes; Japan restricts imports of rice from South-East Asia. The list could go on.

We all know the difficulty of resisting powerful domestic lobbies. They exist in Britain as elsewhere. But this sort of protectionism is not simply selfish; it is also short-sighted. Growth and prosperity in the developing world will over time increase, not diminish, the wealth of the industrialized world. Trade is not a zero-sum game. It is a process which is mutually beneficial, mutually enriching; and with prosperity comes stability and greater security for us all.

This is not some fashionable nostrum dreamt up in an ivory tower. It is a prescription which has already been seen to work. Since 1945, under the auspices of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the world economy has moved steadily towards more open markets. And the result is clear: five decades of unprecedented economic growth and prosperity. It is incumbent upon us to spread this benefit more widely.

That is why I so warmly welcome the proposal put forward by the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, Mr. Ruggiero has proposed that the least-developed countries be granted tariff-free access to the markets of the developed world. I wholeheartedly welcome this initiative. I hope that others will see its compelling logic: the best hope the poor have for sustained economic development is to be given the freedom to export, the freedom to sell.

That freedom enables countries to grow. But free trade is not just helpful to developing countries, it is a global good, its benefits are spread wide, to the producers and consumers in the developed and the developing world alike, who can profit from the greater efficiency that free trade engenders, and who can buy the best and cheapest products available on the world markets. In short, free trade benefits us all. That is why Britain is so firmly committed to bringing the vision of global free trade to reality by the year 2020.

Free trade begins at home. Cutting tariffs and other import restrictions helps developing countries by cutting the costs of production, boosting efficiency and thus helping exports and growth. Combine these benefits with the freedom to export granted by open markets in the developed world, and developing countries and their economies can enjoy a virtuous circle of development. Free trade is therefore the catalyst for growth. This is not just good economic theory. Greater efficiency and higher growth mean more resources available for new hospitals and new schools, better housing and cleaner water. Free trade means real benefits for poor people.

I have described today a challenge for every one of us here. Poverty is something we can all do something about. In May, the Organisation for Economic

Cooperation and Development proposed that the developed and developing worlds together should try to cut the number of people living in absolute poverty by half by 2015. Britain commits itself to that goal. It is achievable.

At home, we must liberalize our economies, minimize the burden of government and lift all restrictions on the free operation of the market. In the global economy, we must remove barriers to trade to allow the developing countries to sell. We must help lift the millstone of debt from those who can least bear it. We cannot allow the poorest members of the world community to become marginalized. We must do our utmost to enable all Members of the United Nations to enjoy the fruits of integration into the global economy. A revitalized United Nations has an essential part to play.

I do not underestimate the difficulty of the tasks that I have described. We can only confront them in partnership, rich and poor together. If we all play our part, prosperity can be placed within the grasp of even the poorest countries.

The Acting President: I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belgium, His Excellency Mr. Erik Derycke.

Mr. Derycke (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): The opening of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under the presidency of Ambassador Razili, takes place at the very moment a large number of States have entered into new commitments on the long road to nuclear disarmament. Our signature, this very morning, of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is another opportunity for Belgium to reiterate its determination to contribute to the fight against nuclear proliferation. I am very happy that this important step was taken today. It should inspire us to continue our common effort towards universal acceptance of this new international instrument, as well as an effective implementation of the international verification measures it provides.

My Irish colleague, Minister Dick Spring, has spoken on behalf of the European Union, whose objectives and concerns my country shares. Belgium endeavours to contribute substantially to the definition and implementation of the policies and plans of action which the European Union intends to carry out throughout the world.

Our intentions before this Assembly should aim to go beyond formalities. Diplomatic language all too often hides our inability to act or our lack of real compassion.

The citizens of the world are fearful as we come to the end of the century. Whatever their country, people are confronted with a new anxiety, a fear of tomorrow, without even realizing that these feelings are shared by the entire world. In numerous regions of the world, this is a fear of physical danger. It is a fear of external threats, aggression and civil war. People die in the same way in Africa, Asia, America and Europe. People are killed for the same dreams and mutilated in body and spirit by the barbarism of modern weaponry and criminal madness born of hatred.

Yes, our world is fearful in the face of all these violations of fundamental human rights which persist notwithstanding the major conferences proclaiming our hope and belief in a world where the rights of men, women and children are respected. In such a world respect for humanitarian law need no longer be questioned.

The crises felt by rich countries cannot possibly compare with the tragic consequences of war and underdevelopment. Yet the crises in Europe, in our prosperous societies, also constitute a humanitarian deficit. They are also the symptoms -- albeit of a different nature — of the same ills of modern times. These include contempt for the human person as a subject of law and his reduction to mere merchandise. Today, society everywhere is in crisis. The logic of the market seems to be an exclusionary mechanism which segregates society. As the Mexican poet Octavio Paz once wrote,

> "The society of consumption has chilled human life with its glacial waters of selfish calculation."

This dehumanization of mankind for financial profit is the primary cause of many scourges which affect our planet, irrespective of the traditions and political systems that characterize each and every region of the world.

In this respect the inertia of individuals transformed into consumers rather than dynamic actors comes to mind, as do the problems of unemployment, the scourges of trade in human beings, child prostitution, organ trading, drugs and all other international criminal activities. These calamities of modern times require the international community to put in place effective mechanisms by which we can combat them together.

As I said during the World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, which was held in Stockholm last August, we must join efforts,

wills, means and resources to eliminate and prevent the proliferation of these activities on our planet. The behaviour of those who profit from such cruel treatment of human beings must be punished by the international community.

Belgium strongly believes that the provisions of the Stockholm declaration and programme of action to criminalize the sexual exploitation of children should be translated into new treaty obligations for all States. The ongoing negotiations on the adoption of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child seem to me the appropriate forum to reach this goal.

The protection of children in this field should equally inspire us to a creative and courageous approach in other United Nations forums where the question of international criminalization of the trade in human beings is dealt with. The Stockholm declaration and programme of action should therefore be reflected in the texts we adopt during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in order to strengthen the protection of the rights of the child and to condemn strongly the exploitation of children.

This year, the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, 2 December 1996, will be devoted to the trade in human beings. The whole world should endeavour to bring this horrendous scandal to an end.

Although we must tackle these social problems, our action should first be introspective in order for it to be credible and efficient. How can modern society be reconciled with the globalization of cultures and trade? How can the balance between the resources of rich countries and the needs of poor countries be restored?

The freedom of the market cannot be absolute, lest it become an absurdity. Our societies can only be viable if they result from a balance between the freedom of the individual and the fundamental rights of the other. The unfortunate evolution of our consumer society and the abandonment of humanist values could lead us — as the events of this summer in my country have shown — to a society where murder and rape become commonplace for some and where abuse is tolerated for too long. We must therefore reconstruct our list of moral priorities and crate a new international moral code based on simple, readily implemented priorities.

Peace, non-violence and acceptance of the other head the list, followed by sharing and social solidarity. Man needs to be reconciled with modern times, reclaiming his central role as subject and actor rather than object and merchandise. These values also should determine the relations between rich and poor countries. Finally, our children should be trained to be involved, responsible citizens, conscious of the consequences of their actions on society. I believe that the formulation of a new international moral code is necessary if we are to overcome our fears and rediscover our will to act — to fulfil our moral duty to take an optimistic approach to international cooperation.

This is why preventive diplomacy must be one of our top priorities. Belgium neither can nor wants to ignore the need to turn its attention to the South, to Africa in particular. We must overcome the desperation of certain situations and do everything within our means to finally allow the development of justice, social progress and democracy in Africa. The situation is extremely troublesome and warrants our basing our political action on the essential priorities, which are, in fact, challenges to be overcome. What are these challenges? to avoid new fratricidal wars and genocide; to ensure that in existing conflicts international humanitarian law is respected; and to guarantee the reconstruction and sustainable development of the continent with full respect for human rights and the rule of law. We should develop our policies while keeping in mind the fundamental relationships that must be constructed between these complementary objectives.

In particular, I am thinking of former President Nyerere's work in Central Africa. Our support for this work shows our willingness to cooperate with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the countries of the region in trying, together, to find solutions to the present crisis and to prevent hatred, death and the ravages of destruction from overrunning Africa, which is dear to us. Belgium supports the convening of a conference on security and stability in the Great Lakes region.

The appointment of Mr. Ajello as Special Envoy of the European Union and of Ambassador Haesendonck as Belgian Special Envoy to the region shows the willingness of the European Union and Belgium to address these concerns. For 1996 and 1997, the Belgian Government has made financial resources available to support the efforts under way. The survival of the populations of Burundi and Rwanda and of the Kivu people in Zaire is at stake, as well as the security and prosperity of Central Africa as a whole.

Within the framework of a policy of conflict prevention which the European Union, in cooperation with the OAU, is trying to elaborate, the Western European Union (WEU), of which Belgium currently holds the chairmanship, is also prepared to offer logistical support to African peacekeeping operations. The WEU's fact-finding mission to Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya returned with strong conclusions, and we intend to pursue the recommended course of action during our chairmanship. My country, which for years has participated in stand-by agreements, must review the mechanisms that might be established to improve the functioning of these agreements.

In this context, I wish to recall our willingness to support logistically and financially any possible contingency planning for Burundi. Possibly in a revised form, the agreements reached in Arusha last 25 June and 31 July should allow support for the normalization efforts in Burundi. This option would clearly be preferred to any other possible solution. The Belgian Government would like to confirm here its political will to be associated with this possible assistance to the security of Burundi, taking into account the modalities that are yet to be defined. However, it is my deepest wish that the Burundi authorities and all active parties in that country will find the road to national reconciliation and peace, to a system of government which guarantees equitable representation and real protection of minorities. I wish to recall that Security Council resolution 1072 (1996) of 30 August demands that these negotiations be initiated before 31 October.

Belgium's preventive diplomacy efforts should also be seen in the framework of European Union initiatives to promote the development of these new societies. The presidential, legislative, regional and local elections to be held in Zaire in 1997 are an opportunity for the Belgian Government and the European Union to show their active solidarity within the framework of collective electoral assistance, which must be coordinated by the United Nations. In order to organize this electoral assistance, I would hope that a representative of the Secretary-General could be appointed as soon as possible. Zaire's people have the right to participate knowledgeably in free and fair elections. The international community has the obligation to facilitate the democratic process in Zaire.

The Belgian Government is aware of the difficulty of arriving at a global approach to the problems of the South, and of Central Africa in particular. We do not believe that we should impose upon other countries any system of government or dictate the way to achieve this. But we must insist on the concept of good governance. That is, there should be systems of government with checks and balances, which guarantee the free exercise of the civil, political, social and cultural rights of the people, and which enhance the development of a free and dynamic society — the only way to ensure harmonious and sustainable development.

Preventive diplomacy is meaningless if weapons remain available to extremist groups who seek, by the suppression of others and by "ethnic cleansing", solutions to problems which should only be found in dialogue, consensus and political negotiation. The United Nations Register of Conventional Arms is an essential element in making the arms trade transparent, a goal which my country and others support. Since its inception, Belgium has provided the arms Register with the information requested. The extension of the Register to other categories of arms is extremely desirable. The Belgian Government believes nevertheless that, for now, the main priority should be making the Register universal. We, together with our partners of the European Union, will continue to concentrate our efforts on this aspect.

Anti-personnel mines are particularly inhumane weapons. Belgium is tirelessly pursuing, in every international forum, its objective of total and universal prohibition of anti-personnel mines. The Belgian Government regrets that very little progress has been made to date. Next October we will participate in the Ottawa conference which, I hope, will be able to give a significant boost to the achievement of our objectives.

When preventive diplomacy and arms control cannot keep peace, peacekeeping missions become necessary. In our view, these peacekeeping and peace-restoration missions remain one of the primary responsibilities of the United Nations. The Belgian Government has taken part in various peacekeeping operations and is assuming military leadership of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES). I am convinced that the success of UNTAES will contribute significantly to the re-establishment of a society which we hope will be pluralist, tolerant and peaceful. Last year, the General Framework Agreement, negotiated in Dayton and signed in Paris led to the establishment, under United Nations auspices, of the NATO-led implementation force (IFOR). My country is, with its partners, part of this peacekeeping operation whose role is to be a force for solidarity, reconstruction and hope for a new Europe. The recent elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina allow us to look toward the future with a degree of optimism.

The increase in number and size of peacekeeping operations that has characterized the recent history of our Organization has allowed the development of political concepts and given a new dimension to international military cooperation. It has also allowed for positive and necessary developments in the field of international humanitarian law. The Belgian Government hopes that the recent agreement between the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Secretariat on the applicability of humanitarian law to peacekeeping operations will permit a swift adoption of the lines of conduct to this effect. This is indispensable and should be welcomed unreservedly by all troop-contributing countries.

For peacekeeping operations to succeed they must be followed up by rehabilitation programmes. Obviously, these programmes, which are meant to eliminate the potential causes of new conflicts, must be developed in a climate of peace that ensures respect for human rights.

This *fin de siècle* is characterized by the size and urgency of rehabilitation operations and by humanitarian intervention and aid. Despite exceptional crises situations, we must not forget the importance of implementing global and sustainable development. The major thematic conferences of the United Nations were designed to establish a strategy for the growth of the human being. I believe that the effective implementation of the moral and political decisions taken at these major conferences is fully in keeping with the new moral code that I hope to see emerge.

In this context, I would like to mention the efforts to reform United Nations institutions and, in particular, the quest for efficiency and sound financial management that should be the watchword of the functioning of our organizations.

I began my statement today by denouncing fear and with a plea for a new international moral code. I would like to conclude an observation that I made at the outset: that words are hollow if they are mere figures of speech and diplomatic formulas. Our words must be alive, and they must spring from peace, silence and complete transparency. Only then will we be able to understand the language of the many children, women and men afflicted by underdevelopment, war and indifference.

The Acting President: I now call on the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia, His Excellency Mr. Mate Granić.

Mr. Granić (Croatia): At the outset, allow me to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the President on his election to the high office from which he will guide the work of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. I am confident that his diplomatic experience and commitment to the noble principles of the Charter will impress upon this session new commitment, determination and vigour. I would also like to express our gratitude to his predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, for the skilful manner in which he presided over the work of the fiftieth session.

After having been the focus of the international community's attention for a long time, due to its being exposed to aggression and to its being part of the most serious regional crisis since the Second World War, Croatia has now entered a new era of its history as a free, sovereign and fully independent State. Croatia is now in a position to deal with and resolve almost all its external and internal affairs with its own resources, and through close cooperation with the international community as an equal partner.

It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to be able to lead the Croatian delegation at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly with the strong conviction that the time of war is finally behind us and that in the region of south-east Europe, Croatia is no longer a part of a larger crisis, but rather an active and decisive agent of introducing the final solution to the crisis and the emerging international order. In this connection, our external and internal policies are becoming increasingly peace-oriented and development-focused.

So far Croatia has been successful in dealing with the question of its statehood and the right of small nations to full self-determination, as well as in defending these rights within the framework of and through the United Nations. We are enormously grateful to this noble institution and its associated agencies, and especially to those Member States whose sons and daughters are exposed to risk, in some cases giving their lives, in a noble endeavour to assist us in ending the horrific war of aggression against our country and in the wider region. Croatia has played host to one of the largest, most expensive and complex peacekeeping operations in the history of the United Nations. Croatia's Government and people, the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and refugees in particular, have on many occasions been critical of the ineffectiveness and ambiguity of peacekeeping mandates. Today, however, the war has ended, and we are finally coming to terms with all of the

political, economic and procedural constraints which the international community had to overcome in order to properly react to the aggression, the calamity of war and the diplomatic uncertainty resulting from the breakup of the communist federation of Yugoslavia and the security vacuum resulting from the closure of the cold-war era.

Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina indeed paid a high price for their struggle to ensure their survival, alongside the progressive efforts of the international community to develop a new concept of the United Nations and other international mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. However, we believe that our experience has given a very positive impetus to the intrinsic need to reform the general concept of peacekeeping operations, the work of the Security Council and the changes in the regional, political and security systems in Europe as well.

Even though the mandate of the joint peacekeeping forces in Croatia has not yet ended – 5,000 peacekeepers are still working in the Croatian Danubian area — I wish to convey to the Assembly the optimism of my Government for the successful completion of the mandate of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) there. This operation just may become the most successful peacekeeping operation in recent history, and perhaps rightfully so, given our own and international frustrations with the unsuccessful attempt at peacekeeping and peacemaking in the region so far.

The successful completion of the UNTAES operation is becoming ever more likely given the recent signing of an agreement on normalization of relations between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the establishment of a new balance in the region, the same balance that helped the international community forge the Dayton Peace Agreement.

We are grateful to all Member States that supported our appeals and calls in the General Assembly for universal respect of international law — as reflected, for instance, in General Assembly resolution 49/43, which created the political conditions and legal framework for the peaceful reintegration of Eastern Slavonia. We are also grateful to Member States whose diplomats and soldiers are more directly involved in the successful implementation of the UNTAES mandate.

Thanks in part to General Assembly support for the universal principles enshrined in the Charter and in part to the intervention of United Nations peacekeeping forces, the countries which emerged following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia are now increasingly heading towards the objective of peacefully resolving mutual problems on a bilateral basis and through regular multilateral contacts, thereby lessening the need for international involvement and mediation. Those problems include the succession to the former State; regional security arrangements and arms control; the search for missing persons; reciprocal minority rights; and the reestablishment of bilateral economic, cultural and other forms of cooperation. The successful expansion of bilateral neighbourly relations based on internationally accepted principles cannot be replaced by the imposition of superfluous and ambitious regional associations.

Taking account of this new reality, in which Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are prepared to resolve all their outstanding problems on a bilateral basis as two equal and sovereign States, the need for the continued presence of peacekeeping forces in Croatia has come to an end.

Any further extension of the UNTAES mandate in Croatia can only encourage delays in its implementation and place at risk the most critical aspect of the mandate: the return of 80,000 Croatian and non-Serb refugees and displaced persons to the region. The continued lack of tangible progress in this area could induce internal and external instability; this is a matter which my Government and the international community should seek to avoid at all costs. For this reason, the clear stance of my Government is that the peaceful integration of the region under the present UNTAES mandate should be completed on schedule.

With the signature of the normalization agreement between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the small United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka, Croatia, will also become obsolete in the foreseeable future. Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia have agreed that the issue of Prevlaka is to be dealt with and fully resolved as a security matter, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the policy of good-neighbourliness. Therefore, there shall be no further raising of the question of territorial adjustments between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia on the Prevlaka peninsula, the five-century-old boundary line between Croatia and Montenegro. However, there is a need to establish a security regime there through peaceful negotiations with a view to the mutual benefit of cross-border economic cooperation.

On the basis of the new reality, Croatia's foreign and internal policy priorities will now aim at compatibility with and timely integration into European regional organizations. At the same time, we remain cognizant of our responsibilities in respect of the peaceful and successful stabilization of neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which Croats are one of the three constituent peoples. The process of the internal stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina will take years and, in this regard, Croatia is fully open to cooperation and collaboration with the international community. The community's presence and assistance there has been significantly less costly to it thanks to Croatia's resources and contributions. Following the initial reconstruction assistance for Bosnia and Herzegovina, an economically viable Croatian State can make the greatest contribution to the viability of the Bosnian Federation and to Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole.

Croatia is prepared to recognize the results of every democratic political process between the three constituent nations and the two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and will continue to give its full support to the successful implementation of the Federation Agreements.

Croatia, fully supportive of a properly balanced Federation as defined at Dayton — the 1—2—3 formula: one State, two entities, three constituent peoples — seeks not only to ensure the survival of the Bosnian Croats as a constituent people in all respects, but also to avoid any situation that could lead to a threatening instability in the region as a whole. In that sense, any attempts to change the constitutional definition of the Federation or to achieve the same results through institutional or power-sharing arrangements are unacceptable to the Republic of Croatia as a party to the relevant Agreements. The same applies to any attempts to change the present entities settlement through an over-centralization of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Any territorial adjustment at the expense of Bosnia and Herzegovina or its two entities shall be viewed as highly detrimental to the stability of the region in general and considered a threat to Croatia's security.

As Croatia continues to move to reestablish its European way of life, while at the same time bringing its young democracy and its governance into conformity with the new European democratic reality, constructive criticism of its actions and attitudes will continue to be taken in good faith. By now, we have accepted the fact that, owing to the needs of the multilateral crisis-management process in the region, the standards set for Croatia in many areas of democratic development are much higher than for other countries in transition. Croatia's extraordinary openness to the innumerable institutions that monitor developments on our soil, especially in the field of human rights, attests to the transparency of our policy and to our deep commitment to democratic values, tolerance and individual rights.

In renewing our expressions of gratitude to the United Nations for its contribution to the successful resolution of an act of aggression against a Member State, we should like to express the readiness of our country, which now has a wealth of experience in peace-mediation efforts behind it, to contribute actively to similar United Nations efforts outside our region. We should now like to become active in the other regular activities of the United Nations and regional mechanisms, to which we offer our experience and experts, to further the common interests and ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

Croatia is actively following the reform process of the United Nations system, and actively participates in some aspects of reform. We fully recognize the need to reorganize the system and adapt it to the changing international system. New objectives are already clearly defined in the socio-economic sphere, and the area of human rights in particular. The United Nations is faced with new realities and problems centred around its goal of promoting the rights of the individual while preserving the identity of groups and nations and respecting the sovereignty of Member States.

We are following with particular interest the process of resolving the financial crisis of the United Nations. As a small State that has experienced exceptional financial needs and shortfalls over the past five years, Croatia supports efforts to find a more equitable scale of assessment for Member States that are experiencing extraordinary situations and whose capacity to pay has, accordingly, changed significantly.

Croatia has already spoken in favour of reforming and strengthening the United Nations system, and especially the Security Council. Our position takes into account new realities in which economic powers such as Germany and Japan, but also individual regions and States — and their views — must be more justly represented. Therefore, Croatia firmly supports the expansion of the Council to 25 members in both categories of membership. Greater transparency in the work of the Council is also essential, and should be

achieved through the adoption of new rules of procedure. The Organization will also be strengthened by the present discussions on changes in general procedures, that will, *inter alia*, reduce and rationalize the costs of overlapping activities of various United Nations institutions. We especially support efforts to rationalize and restructure the socio-economic sector of the United Nations so that it can continue to achieve its rightly ambitious goals around the world.

In its post-war foreign policy and economic activities, Croatia will firstly associate with countries on its continent, but will also strive towards diversification of its relations. Croatia wishes actively to contribute to the promotion of the common interests of small and, especially, new States.

We are pleased to note that apart from the trend towards institutionalizing regional development and functional cooperation, we are entering an era in which States are increasing their level of cooperation, through multilateral diplomacy, on basic development questions, such as: the environment; developing the laws of the sea; enforcing international humanitarian law; protecting human and minority rights; protecting the rights of women and children; promoting disarmament and non-proliferation; and sharing knowledge and resources to help the development of the Third World. We are, therefore, passing over old ideologies, religious or regional affiliation and loyalties. One area in which Croatia will be especially active is the establishment of the international criminal court. We will be one of the sponsors of a draft resolution calling for the timely establishment of this institution.

The world we live in is entering a stage of national individualization but also of ever-closer functional cooperation between States in creating a stable and interdependent new order. Croatia, as a young State that still harbours painfully fresh memories of its struggle for its identity, freedom and right to economic development, sincerely wishes to contribute to the establishment of this new order by actively helping to find solutions to other crisis points, development problems, and disproportions in contemporary societies around the world.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.